Week ending February 1 1958
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JOHN BULL

Book Extract:

NURSE IS A NEIGHBOUR

by Joanna Jones

HORNBLOWER and the Spanish slaver

by C. S. FORESTER

THE MAN ON THE RIM OF DEATH

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Threatening
Love Triumphant
The Cyprus Volcano
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Misguided Youth
Old-fashioned Idea
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Far From Home
Dangerous Folly
Crime In The Village
Perfectly Sweet
In A Vice-like Grip
Some Blithering Idiot
Pep And Punch
With Rosette, Rattle And
While It Lasted
Tortures Of The Damned

Last six Examples are incomplete: if you wish to use one, first complete it with a word of your choice—then make your Bullet as above.

For The Future..................
Worrying..........................
In The......................Ward
Given A Bit Of..................
...............................System
It May Be Her............, But

EXAMPLE ....
BULLET ______________________
EX. ....
B. ______________________
EX. ....
B. ______________________
EX. ....
B. ______________________
EX. ....
B. ______________________

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3. As entry-fee enclose P.O. at the rate of 6d. per Bullet. Fee submitted will be taken to cover Bullets in coupon order—any sent in excess will be disqualified. Plain-paper entries are allowed. Make P.O. payable to JOHN BULL, cross /& Co./, write name and address on back. Coupons must not be mutilated.

4. Entries accepted by post only and on condition that result of this Contest (in JOHN BULL dated March 8), also Editor's decision in any matter of dispute, are accepted as final and legally binding. Odhams' employees (and families) ineligible.

(See "Daily Herald" on Saturday, Feb. 22, for early news of No. 2,127 result.)

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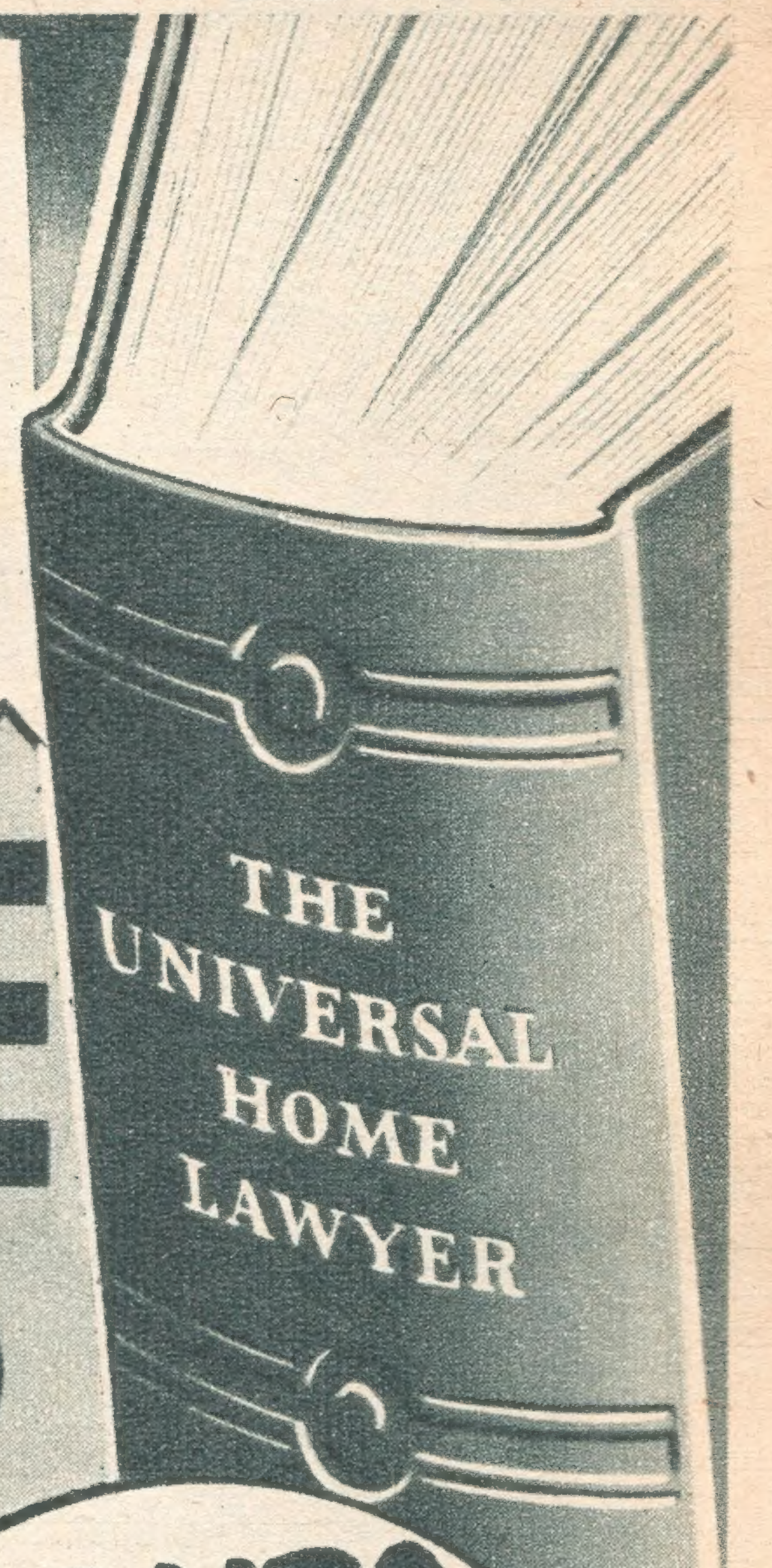

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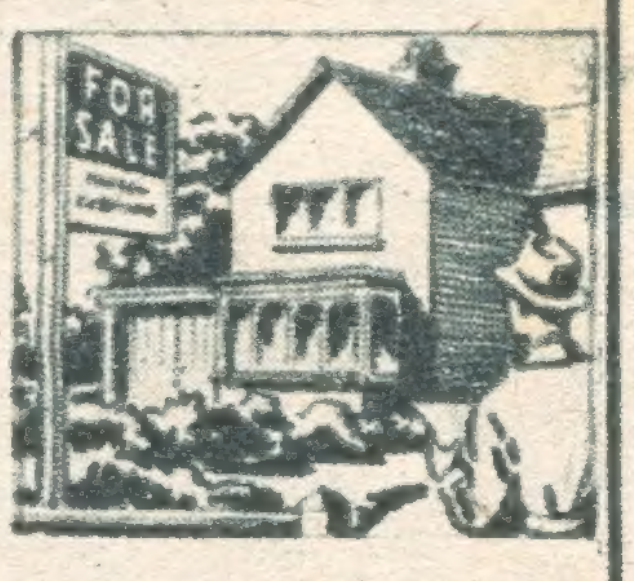

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JOHN BULL

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REPORT FROM THE EDITOR

Leslie Bonnet—he has two thousand mouths to feed

Because the population of Caernarvon, North Wales, is so small, Leslie Bonnet is frequently called upon to serve on juries. This, and the fact that he took a law degree in his youth, gave him the background for his story *Settled Out Of Court*, which begins on page 16. "Nothing quite so exciting ever happened to me," he says, "although I once had some excellent port after lunch and was reprimanded by a judge for falling asleep during an afternoon hearing."

Now aged fifty, Bonnet has been breeding ducks for the past ten years. He lives with his wife and six children on a lonely farm where there are often two thousand mouths to feed at the height of the season. The farm is so remote that his children walk nearly two miles each morning to catch the school bus as it passes the gate. . . . "Another few hundred yards," says Bonnet, "and they could qualify for a school taxi."

For twenty years Bonnet worked in London at the Bank of England. He began as a clerk and eventually became full-time editor of the Bank's house magazine. During the war he went to China to help to develop the Chinese air force on R.A.F. lines and was awarded the Cloud and Banner Decoration with Special Rosette. "But," he says, "I am more likely to go down to posterity as the originator of two new breeds of duck. . . ."

When he came to illustrate our story *Castaway*, which begins on page 19, artist Neville Dear felt very sympathetic towards Griffin Hughes, the man in the story who gets lost in the Baffin Island snow. "I did my R.A.F. training in the depths of a Canadian winter," says Dear. "Although I never got lost there, I was later a navigator and seemed to be highly successful at getting my plane lost. Our aircraft used to stray so far from the squadron over Germany that the other side must have thought we were one of theirs."

Dear literally shivered while he painted the picture for *Castaway*. Last March he moved into a new open plan house with a twenty-one foot long studio which he had specially built for him in the Hertfordshire countryside. "As I drew that snow scene the boiler failed and the weather turned bitterly cold," he says. "I began to think that Mr. Hughes and I were one."

Thirty-four year old Dear became a freelance artist after studying at the Royal College of Art. He prefers to illustrate adventure stories because he likes painting action pictures—"I never seem to have any enthusiasm for painting sentimental pictures." He first wanted to be an artist at the age of seven, "but when I'm working round the clock to get a picture finished I sometimes wish that somebody had knocked the pencil out of my hand there and then."

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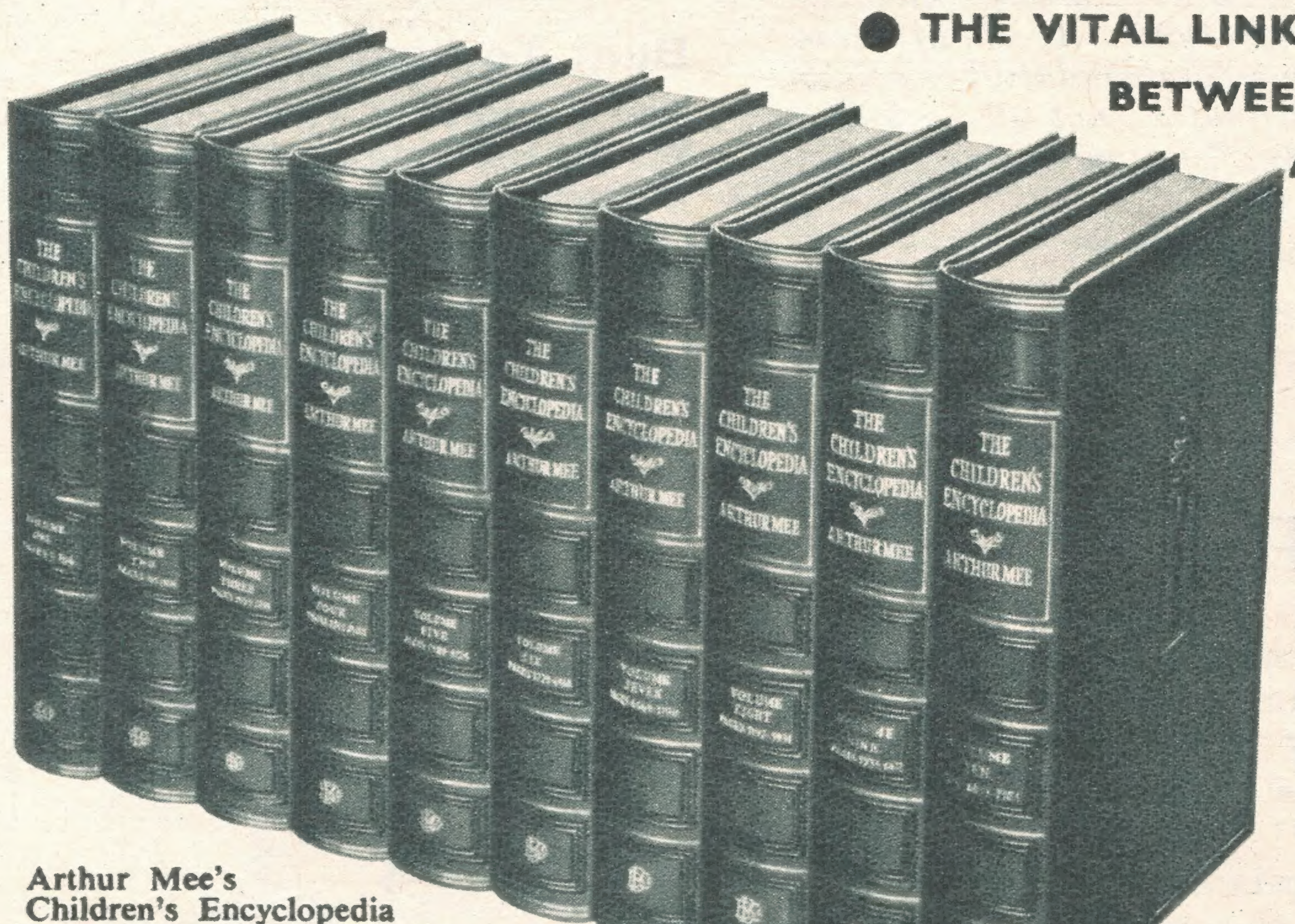

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Free Speech

- Making use of the housewife's brain
- Why we don't want more scientists
- Faster and cheaper than a telegram

We constantly hear complaints about the shortage of teachers.

There seems to me to be a huge, untapped reservoir of potential teachers of young children among mothers who hold Higher School Certificates or similar qualifications, and who have great experience in handling young children.

Couldn't they be given short cramming courses in teaching, and then take charge of the first two or three classes at junior schools? Then qualified teachers could be released for work with the older children who need instruction, not nursing.—I. Thomas, Glamorgan.

The Big Clash

Why do textile and clothing manufacturers not get together on the subject of matching colours? I made a coat for my teenage daughter in a deep red shade and, finding it impossible to buy matching hat and gloves, we chose a pretty pinkish hat. After a long hunt we had to buy gloves we didn't care for to match the hat. Then we viewed hundreds of handbags, but there wasn't one in either the red or pink shade to be had—so we finally bought a black one.

This isn't an isolated case. I sew a lot and often have difficulty in getting thread to match even the popular shades of the moment.—Mrs. M. C. Stewart, Dean Avenue, Craigiebank, Dundee.

"There is some co-ordination," says the British Colour Council, "through the colour lists issued by us after consultation with the various manufacturers' associations. But what is manufactured does depend entirely on the manufacturer. If all of them followed our recommendations, colour ranges would match; not all do follow them, so this situation arises."

Unsportsmanlike

I was a professional footballer, and my son shows considerable talent at the game. Naturally that gives me a great deal of pleasure.

Unfortunately the boy attends a rugger school—the only grammar school in the district—and though he dislikes the game, he has to play it. There isn't even any choice. The school is an excellent one in every other way, and I have no other complaint, but it does seem hard that a boy with a skill at, and enthusiasm for, one game should be forbidden it, and made to play a game he doesn't care for.—M. M., Warwickshire.

Timeless Fashion

I was surprised that in the illustration by Edwin Phillips for the story "Raffles And Shipmate Sadie" (John Bull, January 4), in which great pains had obviously been taken with the details of period dress, there should be a slip-up over the modern-style dress shoe the girl is wearing.—M. J. Taylor, Maldon Road, Middlesbrough.

Edwin Phillips says: "A simple black court shoe of that type was worn then, and can often be seen in the theatrical posters of the period. The style has been worn since well before the turn of the century."

Unfair Tax

I do not think the present motor vehicle licence system is fair. At present the man who owns a small eight-horse-power saloon, which he uses on an occasional weekend jaunt to cover perhaps five thousand miles a year, pays £12 10s. for his year's motoring. The same sum is paid by a company whose representative drives a large car over long distances daily, and whose yearly mileage is 20,000.

This is the alternative I suggest: the present Road Fund Licence would remain, so that registration authorities would have up-to-date records of vehicle owners and so on, but it would cost a nominal sum. The balance of the tax would then be added to the price of petrol, thus ensuring that the man who used the roads most paid tax in the right proportion.—D. J. Wise, Chiphouse Road, Kingswood, Bristol.

Built To Last

May I reply to your correspondent W. J. Harrington ("Free Speech," January 11) on the subject of strengthening pockets and general construction of men's clothes?

I am attending an evening class in tailoring. In September I started making a waistcoat for my husband. Now I am about half-way through. I have done binding, then extra-strong binding, lining, inter-lining, this thing and that thing—I never knew there was such a to-do about men's clothes.

Reinforcements indeed! I shall just about finish with them by the end of the session.—Mrs. J. Seddon, Grange Road, Eccles, Manchester.

Not For Love

All my life I have collected butterflies and my collection is a good one. The other day I showed it to a fellow enthusiast, who offered a large sum of money for it. I mentioned this to my eldest son who said with great surprise, "Why on earth didn't you take it?" My answer was that the collection had been made for my own pleasure.

It also made me think. Why do most people pursue their hobbies these days not for the pleasure they can get out of them, but for the money they can make?

I have a nephew who keeps rabbits, but not for the fun of it—he sells the skins. A friend does printing in his spare time, but not for pleasure—he's printing dance tickets. There seems to be something wrong somewhere.—R. Walker, Birmingham.

Then Dial Again

I have often read about misuse of public telephone kiosks by people standing chatting for hours when they make local calls.

Here in Ireland a local call from a kiosk is cut off automatically after it has lasted five minutes. Surely if this system were introduced in Britain there would not be so many queues outside telephone kiosks.—Miss Rosalind Keller, Nutley Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin.

"There is no way of booking for more than five minutes," says the Irish Embassy. "If you want to speak for longer than that, you just have to dial again."

Scientists—Ugh!

We are being persuaded that Britain needs scientists. What nonsense! They are the last people we need.

Scientists are bigoted, intolerant people. They never know how to enjoy life, they are impervious to the unhappiness of others and the troubles of the world. Of course politicians and industrialists want them. Scientists can be talked into electing tyrants and buying useless—but profit-making—gimmick-goods.

Britain urgently needs lazy, pleasure-loving young men who spend their time in coffee bars talking of interesting things, and women whose only interests are perfume, flowers and pretty clothes. These are the people who make a country fit to live in.—M. O'H., Birmingham, 2.

Price Of Pride

The letter "The U Price" ("Free Speech," January 11) reminds me of the price system generally used in drapers' and milliners' shops years ago.

I worked at a milliner's, where all the hats were of good quality. No price was marked in shillings; we always used a code based on honest way in which y/- represented 9s., and n/- was 3s.

If a well-to-do customer liked what was really a cheap hat, and we knew that she would not buy it at that price, we put the price up 5s. and the sale was made.

On the other hand, if someone liked a hat and couldn't afford it, the price immediately dropped a shilling or two.

There was also the customer who came in with the intention of bargaining. For her we put up the price at first, and the haggling went on until the price was reduced (to what it should have been anyway), satisfying both us and the customer.—Mrs. M. A. Wright, Rydon Avenue, Kingsteignton, Devon.

Stamp Finds

Cecil Rose's story "Stamps Are My Fortune" (John Bull, January 4) was most interesting. I have never been lucky enough to find any imperfect stamps but, chatting with a woman in a bus queue about badly finished goods, I was told, "Even books of stamps are not perfect. I've had to use scissors to cut them out of the last two books I've bought, because they've forgotten to put the wee holes in them."

Needless to say, I have bought my stamps in books ever since, but they never seem to forget to put the "wee holes" in the ones I buy.—Mrs. J. Ganson, Newton, Lundin Links, Fife.

"Faulty stamps get on to the market most infrequently," says the Post Office, "and the odds against buying two faulty books are astronomical." When the stamps are cut to go into books, it is possible that the perforations may be trimmed off, but that, says a stamp dealer, makes the value no greater. "If, however, there are no perforations between the stamps, you may have a find worth a three-figure sum."

Holiday Tickets

The Transport Commission encourages mid-week travel by fare concessions, but one must use the return half of a mid-week return ticket within seventeen days.

Surely the usual period of ticket validity, three months, should apply. This would help both the travelling public and the railways.—F. R. Coupland, Lancaster Avenue, Skegness, Lincolnshire.

"The mid-week return ticket is issued in the summer to help people going away on holiday, says the British Transport Commission. It was designed for that purpose, not as a cheap return ticket for business trips or to be used over a long period. Most people in this country go away for a week or a fortnight, hence the seventeen-day limit."

Take It Yourself

I recently wanted a message delivered urgently in Birkenhead.

I went to send a telegram, but even after reducing the message to an absolute minimum of words, I found it would cost 5s. 9d. to send. So I sent my wife instead, by rail, at a cost of 3s. 6d.—S. Hodgskin, Sunny Road, Lodge, near Wrexham.

John Bull pays one guinea for each letter published in "Free Speech," and at the usual rates for photographs. Readers with problems (other than medical) should write to the John Bull Free Advice Service, whose experts answer questions by post

THE COVER

Seats booked, Granny here to sit in, the baby sleeping soundly—and they're all ready to leave for an evening at the theatre. Then comes the cry from upstairs. The dictator commands the presence of all his subjects, and he just won't be pacified. So downstairs he has to come to be fussed over, and the general sense of urgency doesn't worry so old a hand at this sort of filibustering. Cover artist Wyles says that Father might as well stop looking at his watch and give it to the baby to play with. Time has ceased to count.

JOHN BULL
NURSE IS A NEIGHBOUR
HORNBLOWER and the Spanish claimer
by C. S. FORESTER
THE MAN ON THE RIM OF DEATH

A MAN LIKE AZIZ

by DENNIS HOLMAN

I was sure I knew his face . . . the face of the killer who had ruined me

Surely it was Aziz, and yet it couldn't be. Aziz I once knew as an *abdar*, a club servant in India, but this man was obviously a cosmopolitan, and he looked extremely prosperous.

He wore an immaculately tailored black overcoat with an astrakhan collar, and a homburg tipped slightly on one side to add a touch of rakishness to his urbanity. A large diamond ring flashed on his left hand as he smoked a cigar, sitting on a sofa in the West London Air Terminal lounge.

Near him on the sofa were a brief-case and a large cigar box.

In profile, the hawk nose, the full lips, the pointed beard belonged to Aziz but, as he looked round, I saw I was mistaken. It was not Aziz's expression, and Aziz never had those eyes. The Aziz I had known was mild, contented, obliging. This man was ruthless, with a fanaticism in his

"Excuse me," Rivaz said to a girl next to him. Suddenly I knew that I was near to the answer of a baffling mystery

ILLUSTRATED BY ZELINSKI

We thought we had made the royal box impregnable. But still a terrorist reached it—an invisible man with a bomb

eyes—hollow eyes, ringed with shadows, belying the well-being and self-satisfaction that exuded from the rest of him. And yet they were hauntingly familiar.

I had memorized the list of names on Flight 140, and I went through it mentally. I stopped at one, Aaron Rivaz—a Syrian jeweller. The description supplied by Scotland Yard fitted the man like Aziz.

My memory was raking back through the years when a woman's voice suddenly filled the air terminal: "British European Airways announce the departure of Flight 140 to Rome. . . ."

I followed Rivaz to the bus in the aromatic wake of his cigar. Instinct told me I was on the verge of a discovery, and I sat a few seats behind him, waiting for the explanation to come.

"Excuse me," he said to the passenger on the seat next to him, and he stood up to push his brief-case on the rack above. At the side of the brief-case he shoved the cigar box. But there was something just a trifle too casual about the movement. It underlined the importance of the cigar box in my mind, and suddenly the penny dropped.

I knew who he was. I knew that within a few feet of me at that moment I had the answer to a mystery that had wrecked my career nineteen years ago, and baffled me ever since. . . .

To explain, I think I should go back to 1938 when, as a comparatively junior officer of the Indian Police, I was posted to Simla, the gay summer capital in the Himalayas. My unenviable job was to protect the person of the Viceroy. The pace, the pitfalls, the responsibilities, were exhausting. One wrong move invoking a complaint from the Military Secretary to the Viceroy, and a career could be marred.

Before the Viceroy and Vicereine arrived I was briefed by the senior superintendent of police at district headquarters. I was responsible for searching and patrolling sixty-eight miles of mountain railway track stitched through something like a hundred tunnels.

The S.S.P. had warned me: "A bomb could be hidden in any one of those tunnels. God help you if anything happens."

I survived the ordeal, to be pitched immediately into the swing of routine viceregal engagements. There was little time off and we swore justifiably when Their Excellencies decided on going somewhere on the spur of the moment and lightning arrangements had to be laid on.

I particularly remember a Sunday morning when I had to cancel a pheasant shoot at the last minute, because the Viceroy wanted a round of golf at Naldera, nine miles beyond Simla.

I rode my horse to the golf course, which was laid out on a grassy hillside. The Viceroy acknowledged my salute. "Care to make a foursome?" he said. "This beggar Manners says his arm or something's hurting him."

Manners, an aide-de-camp with a suitably apologetic expression, immediately offered me the loan of his golf clubs and I, virtually under viceregal command, accepted. Another aide-de-camp and a girl named Jill completed the foursome, and in our wake followed Inspector Pascoe, the Viceroy's personal bodyguard, with a significant bulge under his jacket.

I looked round. Below us on the road the Vicereine and a couple of girls, assisted by Manners, were fussing over a picnic hamper. The road was guarded by constables with rifles, and four others were posted on the crest to cover any possible approach from the other side.

From a policeman's point of view the scene was reassuring. I thought Pascoe was rather overdoing it, so I said, quietly: "Inspector, you can stand down until after the round."

"Sir," he replied, "I have orders from the S.S.P. to stick within five yards of H.E. News came through before we left—Dr. Sen is in Simla."

I couldn't very well countermand the order, and Pascoe traipsed grimly after us from hole to hole. That's what one terrorist could do to our peace of mind.

At police headquarters I saw a photograph of Dr. Sen, a clean-shaven Hindu in *khaddar*, or cotton homespun. He was undistinctive, except for a wide, fanatical expression about the eyes. There were scores of saboteurs like Dr. Sen in India, many of them trained abroad and smuggled back over the passes through Afghanistan and Baluchistan. We had most of them tagged.

Few slipped through the counter-spy network of the C.I.D., which was manned by determined and dedicated men.

I had applied for a transfer to the C.I.D. I wanted to become part of this system, so effective that it was necessary to present a comparatively slack exterior to reassure suspects, and so complex that its budget was a close government secret. My hopes of getting in depended on what I made of the Simla job, so I took care whenever giving an order to check that it had been properly carried out.

I was taking no chances and yet I came unstuck. . . .

I had never really been anxious about the Gaiety Theatre on the Mall, as there were only three possible ways of getting in—through the front entrance, through the stage door and through the gallery exit door at the back of the building. It was simple enough to guard these after a search had been made of the intimate little theatre. We used to say the Gaiety was practically terrorist-tight, and still a terrorist got in.

The Gaiety cradled the fashionable amateur dramatic club, and it was a ritual for the Viceroy and Vicereine to attend their monthly production. An A.D.C. play ran four nights. Their Excellencies went to the last, the gala performance, on a Saturday.

The play was *Mary Rose*—I cannot think of it even now without a feeling of horror, without getting its strange, haunting music on my brain.

The gala night followed the familiar pattern. The stalls and boxes had been reserved for senior officials and their parties, who arrived in a succession of rickshaws and crowded into the red-carpeted foyer, hailing each other and gossiping at the tops of their voices. I was in the foyer, in the scrum, dressed for the occasion in tails, but on duty and conscious of the weight of an automatic pistol in a holster against my chest.

Presently the stream of rickshaws stopped; it meant that all approaches to the theatre had been blocked. Constables near the theatre entrance were standing stiffly at ease, ready for the word of command that would bring them to attention. The uniformed inspector and sergeant were straightening their jackets. Two A.D.C. *abdars* were unrolling a strip of red carpet down the front steps. It was four minutes to eight.

"Ladies and gentlemen, take your seats please," the theatre manager called from the stairs leading to the gallery. "Their Excellencies are due at any moment."

The buzz of conversation stopped. The crowd in the foyer squeezed through the auditorium door and flooded into the stalls.

There was the crack of arms being presented, then the viceregal car drew up at the entrance. Their Excellencies stepped out and walked up past the saluting police through the auditorium door, and turned left into the passage leading to the boxes at the back of the stalls. The audience stood as they entered the royal box. The orchestra played "God Save the King." Then everybody sat. The lights went down and the curtain went up. . . .

For nineteen years I tried to puzzle how the bomb got into the royal box. It had been searched and guarded by uniformed men right up to the time the Viceroy entered and took his seat in front on the right-hand side. After that Pascoe stood in the passage outside the door.

During the interval following the second act, the Viceroy and his party went into the lounge bar, and Pascoe accompanied them. The royal box was left unattended, the door unguarded, for perhaps seven minutes. But nobody in the audience, other than the V.I.P.s in the four other boxes, had access, even to the passage behind the boxes. That was why it seemed impossible to account for what happened later.

The third act was well under way when the door of the royal box opened and Manners appeared. "Inspector," he said, "I can hear something ticking."

Pascoe reacted immediately. Pushing past the aide-de-camp, he turned on the light, excused himself for the interruption, and started searching. Under the Viceroy's chair he found a cigar box. He listened with his ear to it for a moment, then he switched out the light and took it away. He carried it out of the building through the front entrance, and round to the side, to a horse trough. He put it in the trough. The water stopped the clock and neutralized the detonator.

In another few minutes, as we discovered later, the thing would have gone off. Pascoe not only saved the lives of the Viceroy, his wife, and those with them, but averted repercussions that might have been felt for generations.

Pascoe got a medal. But I was directly responsible for the security of the theatre that night. I should have taken into account the fact that the Viceroy always had a drink in the lounge bar, almost invariably in the second interval, and that the royal box would be left unattended. There shouldn't have been an Achilles Heel, I was told.

But who had found it? The loyalty of the V.I.P.s and their families was beyond question; in any case not one of them was alone for a moment. Only Aziz remained as the one Indian who had access to the passage, who could have got inside the royal box without being seen.

Aziz was one of the three A.D.C. *abdars* who normally served club members in the Green Room, but on show nights served in the theatre. While the two other *abdars* stayed in the lounge bar, Aziz took drinks backstage for the cast.

During the intervals it was also Aziz's job to go among the audience with a tray, selling sweets and cigarettes. He would start in the gallery, then come down to the stalls, and perhaps go into the boxes if he saw any likely customers—indeed, one of the ushers was almost certain he had seen Aziz go into the passage behind the boxes during the second interval.

But Aziz was definitely not there. He did not get downstairs. Somebody in the gallery bought a box of chocolates which he paid for with a 100-rupee note. Aziz had to take the note to the Green Room barman to have it changed, and by the time he returned the third act had started.

Everybody, it seemed, had an alibi, even Dr. Sen. The house where he was staying in Chota Simla was watched, and on the gala night only one man, an unknown Moslem, as the C.I.D. reported, had gone out at about seven o'clock to return at ten.

The bomb was inexplicable. Somebody had

Dr. Sen's exit was blocked by a flight of passengers. In a moment Saunders had him in a swiftly applied arm-lock

made absolute fools of us, but unfortunately the facts were too widely known in government circles for the matter to be hushed up. The Inspector General of Police ordered a full inquiry. There had to be a scapegoat, so I resigned. . . .

I used to lie awake at nights trying to work it out, chasing one fantastic theory after another, till I'd fall asleep in a jumbled nightmare. I sailed from India with the riddle pursuing me.

To my good fortune, the Inspector General had not been unsympathetic. The last time I saw him before I left, he suggested that he could help to get me into the Palestine Police.

Later I took him at his word, and a letter he wrote to an old school friend on my behalf helped to secure me an appointment to the Palestine Police. My Indian experience proved invaluable, and after a few years promotion followed. But this force was disbanded when the state of Israel was created after the war.

Again I was lucky. I had become something of an expert on terrorist organizations, and on the strength of this I managed to get into M.I.5. I was considered useful, I believe, because of my acquaintance with a large number of the secret agents and saboteurs who had been planted in the Middle East before the war and who were still active in the area. I liked my work. I was contented because I felt my experience was being put to good use.

Then a week ago I was sent for by my chief.

"I suppose you've read in the paper today that Lord Millarne has been appointed the United Nations Commissioner for the Middle East?" he said. I admitted that I had.

"Lord Millarne is flying to Rome, and then on to Jerusalem," he said. "He's got to have a specialist escort while he's there."

"That job's going to be a pain in the neck for somebody," I remarked.

"For you," he told me pleasantly. "You're the specialist who's escorting him."

Since Lord Millarne insisted on his security arrangements being kept as inconspicuous as possible, I was instructed to proceed independently to the airport; which was how I came to be travelling on an airport bus, and why the appearance and actions of a certain Aaron Rivaz absorbed so much of my interest. . . .

I still don't know what it was that suddenly made the mystery of the bomb outrage quite clear. I can't say whether it was the cigar box, or the man's strange resemblance

Continued on page 22

THE MAN ON THE RIM OF

He looked down—and shivered. One move and he would plunge 140 feet with the crumbling mill chimney. Then rescue reached up—and fell short

by REX GRIZELL

Safe on the ground, Tom Jackson looked up at the chimney he had to take down. From where he stood to its weather-rotted top it was 140 feet tall. For more than twenty years, since the mill had last operated, the chimney had been left unrepaired.

He could see chinks of light between the upper stones where the mortar had long since powdered and blown away.

"I don't like the look of it," he said to John Valentine, the mill caretaker. "It's dangerous." Jackson did not mention that other steeplejacks had refused the job because of the danger.

"You'll be felling it?"

"No. I wish I could. The main sewer from the village runs beneath this field. If I fell it, the weight will break the sewer. I have to go up top and take it down piecemeal." As Valentine walked away, Jackson started to fix his first ladder.

It was 10.30 a.m., Tuesday, October 8, 1957. A disused cotton mill, half a mile from the moorside village of Sabden, near Burnley in Lancashire.

By 3.30 Jackson and his assistant, Stanley Wright, had completed the laddering of the chimney. While Wright stayed on the top ladder, Jackson climbed on to the coping. Its condition was even worse than he thought. Only their own weight and a rust-eaten iron band kept the big coping stones in place.

Working gingerly, Jackson loosened the iron band, eased it off and threw it down. Next, with his right leg outside and his left leg inside the chimney, he straddled one of the coping stones. He swung his crowbar to shift out the first stone.

With the force of the blow Jackson's lofty seat began to rock. A huge stone teetered and slid off. Almost knocking Wright off the ladder—it brushed his sleeve as it passed—the three-hundredweight block of stone plummeted down and hit the ground with a crunch that shivered through the chimney.

At the same moment, the stones beneath Jackson seemed to turn to jelly. He threw himself forward and towards the inside of the chimney, wrapping his arms round the stone in front of him, and using his weight and strength to counterbalance the wobbling stones. If they went, he would go; to a certain death.

Clutching the stones, more than five times as high as an ordinary house above the ground, Jackson tried to keep calm. The top of his ladder was within reach of his right hand, but when he tried to pull himself towards it the movement he made set the stones rocking again.

He lay still. *If I make a sudden move for the ladder*, he thought, *the stones will go, and take the ladder and both of us with it.*

"Go down, Stan. There's nothing you can do."

Every step Wright took as he climbed down vibrated through the chimney to the pit of Jackson's stomach. He felt sure that he would reach the ground before Wright.

For ten minutes Jackson looked desperately for some way out of his predicament, but there was nothing he could do. Even a sharp movement of his head set the stones quivering.

"I can't move," he yelled down to Wright. "Go for the fire brigade."

Wright set off to run to Sabden village to find the nearest telephone.

Jackson, thirty-five years old, married with three young sons, waited. His stillness made him conscious of the quiet, sunlit afternoon.

The road by the mill was deserted. In the rough field below him sheep were grazing. The only sound came from the millstream and the occasional crowing of a cock on a nearby farm.

Jackson was aware of his isolation, of the nearness of disaster, but he was not yet worried. His position was cramped, but war service as a Royal Marine Commando and ten years of steeplejacking had given him great strength. In half an hour at the most firemen would arrive, put a ladder up and take him off. He did not doubt that he could hold on.

At 4.20 Accrington fire station received Wright's call from the Victoria Mill at Sabden. Within thirty seconds the turntable ladder was on its way, with Station Officer Frank Kelly in charge. Three minutes later the pump escape followed.

Wright arrived back at the chimney a few minutes before the fire brigade. Realizing that Jackson—lying on the stones in his shirtsleeves—would soon feel the cold, Wright took off his leather jerkin, intending to throw it over Jackson. He had climbed only three of the seven ladders when Jackson called to him to go back. He could feel the stones shaking.

As Wright went down, Jackson heard the distant clanging of the fire bell, and at 4.30 the thirty-foot-long appliance trundled into the field below the chimney. Jackson allowed himself a sigh of relief.

Kelly saw at once that there would be difficulties. The ground at the base of the chimney was uneven and had soft patches. "There was a risk that the ten-ton appliance would sink on one side, and that the weight of the extended ladder would carry the whole lot over," he recalls.

Kelly ordered firemen to bring flagstones from the mill floor to improve the ground for the stabilizing jacks. Then he attached one end of a rope to the top of the turntable ladder and put five firemen on the other end. If the ladder began to tilt, quick action from them might save it.

Up on the chimney Jackson could not understand why the firemen were taking so long. In fact, they began to raise their ladder only ten minutes after their arrival.

Unable to relax his position for a second, Jackson watched the ladder reaching up towards him. Then the noise of the winding gear ceased. The ladder stopped, fully extended. The top was forty feet below him.

Kelly climbed up and called to Jackson from the top.

"Can I get to you up your ladder?"

"No. If you try that the two of us will go."

Kelly was impressed by Jackson's apparent calmness, but when Kelly went down, and the ladder was lowered, Jackson felt his hopes go with it. Incongruously, he tried to remember where he had seen Kelly before. Then he remembered that they had been boys at school together.

At 4.45 Divisional Fire Officer Paul Catterall arrived from Nelson and took charge of the rescue. He at once decided to level the ground so that the turntable ladder could be moved in closer to the chimney, and so reach higher. Level ground would also make the ladder more secure. Using picks and spades, all the firemen, including Kelly and Catterall, tackled the job.

By now, as news spread that the ladder did not reach Jackson, villagers were collecting in the field below him.

At 4.58, Catterall sent a radio message. "Request attendance of steeplejacks with

Steeplejack Jackson at home with his family. His wife went through an agony of waiting, unable to leave the children to go and find out what was happening

DEATH

ladders. Also send for ambulance and notify police." In the control-room, Fireman Thomas Culley rang the first steeplejack on their list—George Freear, of Accrington. He was out.

Next on the list was Tom Jackson, of Great Harwood. Culley, not knowing the name of the trapped man, rang him. Mrs. Jackson answered the telephone. Her husband was not in, she said. He was working at Sabden but would be back soon. Culley said it did not matter, and rang off. Fire Prevention Officer Roy Redhead took a towing vehicle and went to find Freear.

Police at Padiham, near Sabden, received Fireman Culley's call at 5 p.m. They radioed Police Constable Keith Whiteside, who was patrolling the area in a car.

Soon after 5 p.m. the turntable ladder was moved closer to the chimney and raised again. It was still more than thirty feet short.

JACKSON shouted down to them to send for a longer ladder. Catterall went up to speak to him. He told Jackson that the ladder was as long as any in the north of England. They would have to work from it.

He suggested they might lash a ladder to the top of it. Jackson, who had now been more than one hour motionless on the stones, agreed that it was worth trying. His technical knowledge made him doubt whether it would be possible. But he hoped.

There was no ambulance available at Padiham, and at 5.5 the call was relayed to Great Harwood. At 5.7 Whiteside arrived at Sabden in the police patrol car. When he saw the crowds he reported by radio to the police station at Padiham.

Back on the ground, Catterall tried to get every possible method of rescue in hand, in case some should fail. He sent men to the village for ladders. He sent a radio call to the county fire brigade H.Q. at Fulwood, near Preston, asking them to get a helicopter.

At 5.10, wondering now whether he could get Jackson down before nightfall, he radioed for emergency lighting equipment.

Jackson had no watch. It seemed to him several hours since the firemen had arrived. The sun had disappeared behind the hills and mist was coming up from the fields. Twilight was beginning to fill the valley.

It was getting colder every minute. Jackson could no longer feel his left leg, and the numbness was creeping up the whole of that side of his body. He knew that cramp might cause him to lose his grip, yet he dared not move his legs to restore the circulation.

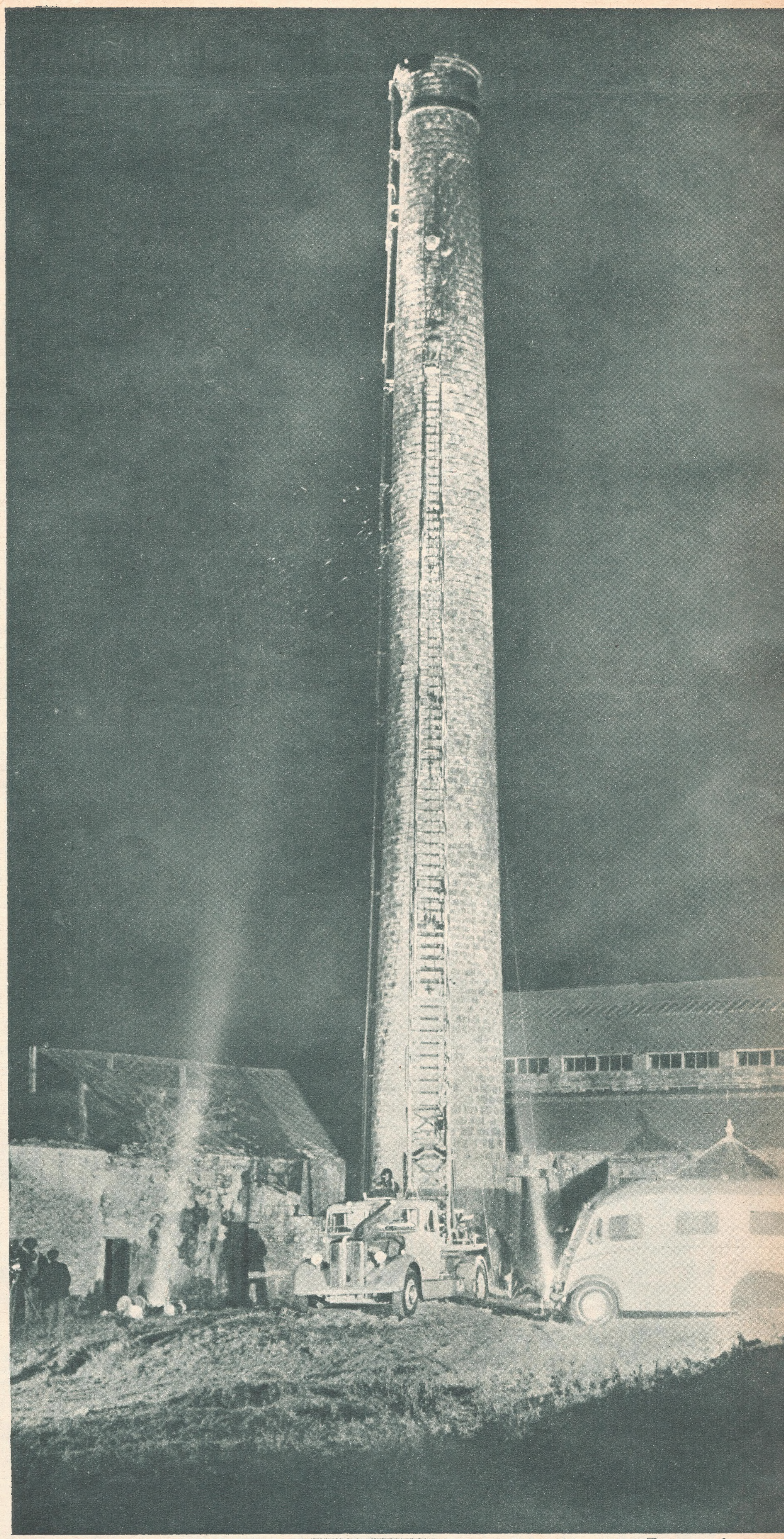
He remembered that he had promised to take nine-year-old Michael, his eldest boy, to the pictures that evening. But now he was wondering whether he would ever get back to his wife and children.

An ambulance drove up and parked conspicuously below, bringing his thoughts back to himself. They might have kept it out of sight, he thought.

As Jackson clung on, trying to fight off cramp and cold, the search went on for a steeplejack. George Freear was not at home at 26 Rothwell Avenue, Accrington. Mrs. Freear suggested that Redhead should go for her son, Horace Freear, at 40 Ormerod Street.

Horace Freear was not in either. But at the little general shop next door, kept by Freear's wife, Isabel, Redhead found out where he was working. At 5.18, Redhead reported that he had found Freear. He had no ladders not already in use, but he thought he could borrow some.

As Redhead and Freear set off to find steeplejack's ladders, Catterall received a message from



Three hours have passed. Jackson is lying motionless at the top of the chimney as Freear and Wright inch up towards him. On the left of the chimney is the ladder Jackson had fitted

H.Q. at Preston. They had tried to obtain a helicopter from the American base at Burtonwood. The only one available was not equipped for rescue work.

They had then been in touch with the R.A.F. Air Sea Rescue base on Anglesey. Neither of their helicopters was available.

Men arrived from the village with long ladders. Wright and a fireman tied one to the top of the turntable ladder. It reached a third of the way to Jackson, but the top was free. Catterall refused to allow anyone to risk his life by mounting the unsecured, nearly vertical ladder to try to fix the top to the chimney. He realized that the second and third ladders would be even more unsafe. Jackson watched them untie the ladder and abandon the attempt.

Inspector Eric Bowden, of the Padiham police, called from an off-duty spell, drove up at 5.30 with Sergeant James Strettle. There were now hundreds of villagers on the scene, trying to see Jackson in the half-dark, estimating his chances.

Strettle made a brief attempt to disperse the crowd. "Come on, now, get along home all of you. You're doing no good here."

"We're doing more good than you," a village woman said sharply. "At least we're praying for him." The presence of two priests gave added weight to the old woman's words. The crowd was moved back out of range of falling stones.

At 5.35 Redhead and Freear drew up outside a house in Blackburn Road, Great Harwood. Freear had realized that the rescue would be steeplejack's work. Firemen would be no use to him once he got off the turntable ladder. When Betty Jackson came to the door, Freear asked her if Tom could lend him some equipment and come with him to Sabden, where there was a steeplejack trapped on a chimney.

White with shock, Mrs. Jackson told Freear that her husband was working at Sabden. She realized that the trapped man must be Tom. If it had been Wright, Tom would have telephoned to say that he would be back late.

Reassuring Mrs. Jackson, Redhead and Freear turned and raced back to Accrington. At home, Freear looked for a key to a storeroom he had shared with his father. He could not find it. They drove to the storeroom and forced the door. It was dark inside. Freear gathered up the first set of ladders he could find.

Just after 6 p.m. the county emergency lighting tender arrived. It had come thirty miles from Stretford, on the other side of Manchester. Searchlights and floodlights were focused on the chimney top.

Jackson's strength was failing. First one leg and then the other would become completely numb. A cold wind came down from Pendle Hill, 1,800 feet high. His teeth chattered uncontrollably. His shivers sent tremors through the stones. Even the firemen down below were feeling the cold. Mrs. Dinah Towler, from the poultry farm next to the mill, passed round jugs of hot tea.

Then it seemed to Jackson that there was a long spell in which nothing happened. He stopped thinking of his family, of the rescue. He no longer tried to see what was happening below. His head was down on the stones. He held on, waiting. Scores of bats, attracted from their resting place in the roof of the disused mill by the lights, swirled round him.

In the crowd the word went round that nothing could be done until the steeplejack arrived. When he did come at 6.15, his appearance did not inspire much confidence in the watchers. Five feet two inches tall, scrawny, with thick pebble glasses and a deaf aid, Freear looked unimpressive.

"'E don't look much," someone said. But Freear soon showed the crowd that he had what the situation called for—guts and skill.

First he secured the top of the turntable ladder to the chimney by lashing it to steel spikes which he drove into the stonework. Then he drove in another spike and hung a small pulley from it. This was to pull up his ladders and equipment.

Next Freear took his first ladder and lashed it to the top of the turntable ladder. Reaching up, he hammered two steeplejack's wedges into the chimney, the width of his ladder apart. Each of his five-foot ladders had a pair of short, movable arms halfway along its length. Each arm had a right-angle hook at the end which Freear dropped into holes at the end of the iron wedges.

The first ladder, lashed at the bottom and fixed to the chimney by its iron arms, was now safe for Freear to stand on. So far he had taken twenty minutes. He was two feet six inches nearer to Jackson.

Slowly, searching the chimney for sound places, banging in the wedges, slotting his ladders into the top of each preceding one, unscrewing the arms, fixing them into the wedge holes, tightening them up, finding a new place for his pulley after each ladder, Freear crept up the chimney towards Jackson.

As he worked he noticed that the ladders he had snatched up in the darkness were an old set with rungs missing, long out of use. Nothing to be done about that.

He went steadily on. Every time he reached down for something the glare of the searchlights blinded him. Every blow he struck to fix his wedges brought a shower of dust and mortar down on him.

Balanced above him Jackson felt every blow of Freear's hammer like the stab of a dentist's drill on a raw nerve. The stones wavered like a child's pile of bricks.

Now that he knew there was an expert working on the rescue, Jackson became hopeful again. Excitement sent his blood circulating faster. From somewhere he found new strength. . . .

At home in Great Harwood, distraught, not knowing what to do, Betty Jackson wandered from room to room with her coat on, her bewildered children at her heels.

She picked up the telephone to ask the fire brigade for information. Before she received a reply she put the receiver down and started to get tea for the eighteen-month-old baby boy, who was crying.

Halfway through preparing the tea she remembered the telephone and went back to it. The fire brigade could only tell her that "as far as they knew Mr. Jackson was all right." The phrase increased her anxiety; she felt they must know more than that. She telephoned the police and was answered in the same words.

Frantic with apprehension she rang her mother, asking her to send her brother, Geoffrey Eggleston, to Sabden so that he could let her know what was happening. Unable to think

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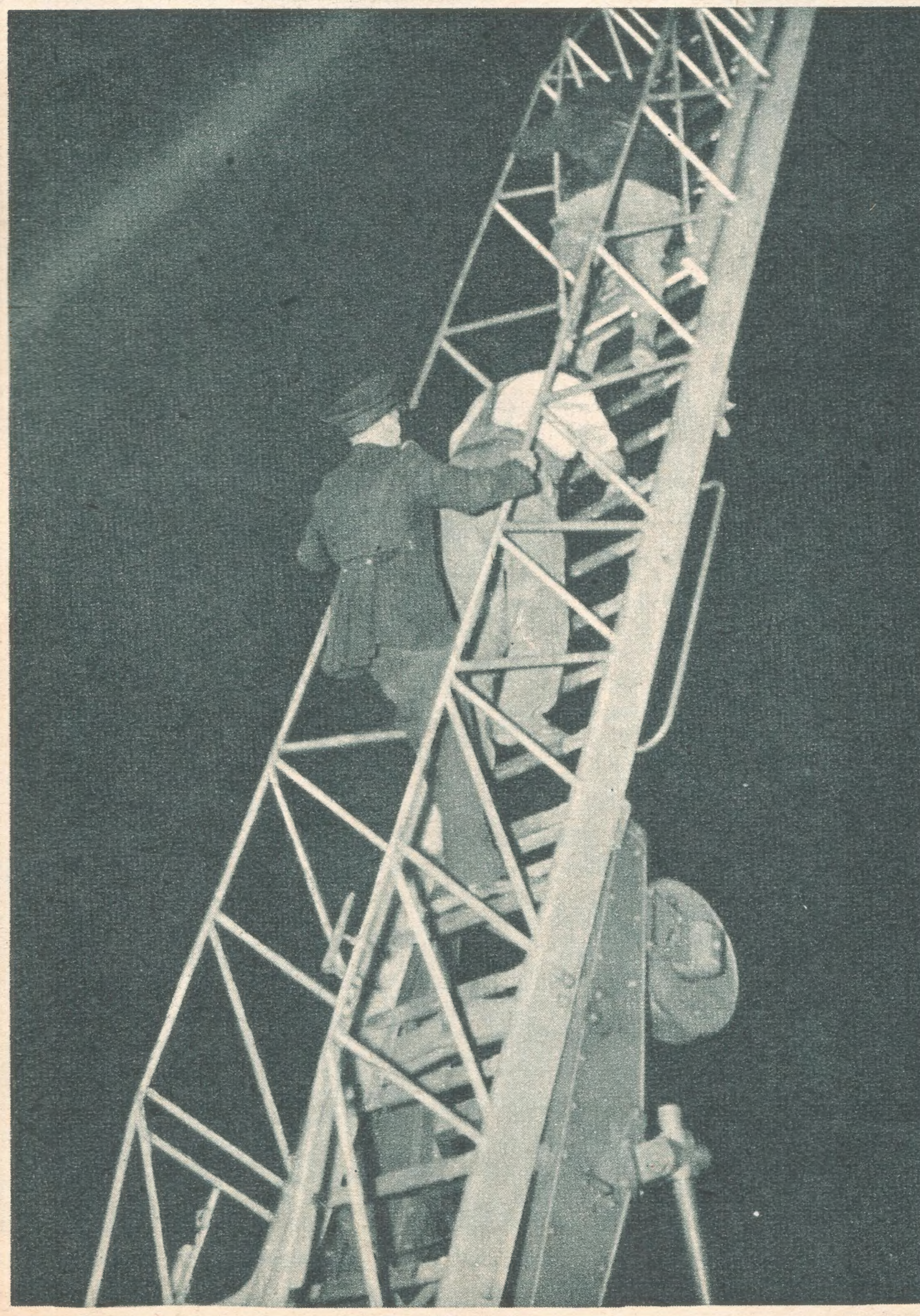


After four hours . . . Jackson is helped back to safety. At first he was too stiff with cold to risk climbing down

Freear (right) and Jackson celebrate the rescue. After the accident Jackson completed the job on the chimney

The spice in your life

by MARK WILSON

You'll find it in sausages and in scent and even in your dentist's chair. It's today's hot favourite

Scientists are trying to give babies' toys and rattles a tasty flavour

Oil of cloves is used by dentists to kill germs as well as pain during extractions

Exotic flavours are fashionable today, yet few people know just how much spice they eat

Every year the perfume industry uses a large part of the world's spice output

EXPERTS on scientific selling have recently been trying to think like babies. A plastic rattle may look bright enough, and may make a pretty sound, but, they decided, what baby really wants to know is—what does it taste like?

So that babies and small children are not put off by the unpleasant odour of some plastics used in toy manufacture, research chemists are now using perfumes based on the oils of cloves and cinnamon to combine with raw plastics to give the end product an attractive smell.

Spices have been used by man for thousands of years, but never more widely than today. Spice merchants are supplying the needs of industrialists, doctors, dentists, soft drink makers, farmers, barmen, butchers, perfumiers, bakers, and the manufacturers of sausages, canned meats, tinned soups, pickles, sauces and pet foods. In addition grocers report that housewives are buying more rare spices than at any time since the war.

"Our counter assistants are gradually learning not to raise their eyebrows when asked for unusual cooking spices such as fenugreek and cardamom," says the grocery buyer of a large West End store. But sometimes it is the housewife who gets the shock. One customer at this store was told that her purchases came to 29s. As an afterthought, she asked for an ounce of saffron.

"I could get you an ounce, madam," said the assistant. "But that would cost you about another thirty shillings. Normally we sell it a pinch at a time. These little packets contain about half a dram." The customer bought a pinch for 1s. 4d.

One society caterer describes saffron as a fashionable spice. She buys it by the pound and uses it in Continental dishes served at débutante and embassy parties. Used by the Romans in their baths, and grown by Solomon in his garden, saffron is today the costliest of spices. The retail value of a ton of it would be more than £50,000.

The housewife is more familiar with spices than she realizes. In a pound of sausages she may buy pimento from Jamaica, coriander from Central Europe, cardamom from the East Indies, cinnamon from Ceylon, mace and nutmeg from the East and West Indies, ginger from Jamaica or Sierra Leone, cayenne pepper from South America, Africa and China, and cloves from Zanzibar.

Most people know cloves as the flavouring in apple pie, and as a remedy for toothache, but these dried, unopened flower buds of a tropical tree are among the most versatile of spices. Dentists use oil of cloves because it is germicidal as well as pain killing, and also mixes readily with oxide of zinc to form temporary stoppings. It is also an important raw material for all branches of the perfume industry, from making soaps to blending exotic scents sold in five-guinea bottles. Vanillin, a vanilla substitute, is made from oil of cloves.

Zanzibar, where cloves form eighty per cent of the total exports, sends a thousand tons a month to Indonesia. They are wetted, shredded and mixed half and half with tobacco to make cigarettes. In Britain the finest cloves are used to make pomanders: oranges are stuck all over with cloves like pin-cushions, and then dried in ovens. Used in the Middle Ages to ward off plague, they are now usually hung in wardrobes to keep off moths.

Cinnamon, which in Britain is used in cough medicines and in the perfume industry, but only occasionally in cooking, is the most important culinary spice in Mexico. In addition to using it with almost every meal, Mexicans like to stir their drinks with a cinnamon stick. Before the war small boys frequently got into trouble for smoking the thinly rolled cigar-shaped bark. "The rise in price since the war has put a stop to that," says John Brown, whose firm in the City of London has been dealing in spices since the seventeenth century. "At ten shillings a pound cinnamon is too dear for today's boys."

PEA nutmegs, so called because of their small size, are used in some European countries for making beads. Before the war Brown used to supply them for flavouring cocktails. "Some barmen thought it looked impressive to grate a little nutmeg into a cocktail and then throw the rest away, but they didn't like to throw away a large one."

Brown knows at least eighteen recipes for mulled drinks and punches which call for the use of cloves, cinnamon or nutmeg. At one time innkeepers kept a large pewter shaker full of ground ginger on the bar so that customers could pep up their beer and porter. Today ginger by the ton goes into the manufacture of ginger beer and ginger biscuits. Chillies put the bite into Worcester Sauce and Yorkshire Relish as well as liniments used by athletes and racehorse trainers. Chilli paste is an important ingredient of medicated cotton wools for chest complaints and rheumatism. Paprika is used by bird fanciers. Fed to canaries it makes their plumage turn red.

Spices, which are imported as dried seeds, buds, berries or bark, are ground in Britain. Most of them are ground in modern machines, but when a very fine powder is required, two five-ton stones, known as edge runners, are used. The method is the same as that used in Biblical times except that an electric motor instead of a donkey turns the stones.

In the kitchens and markets of the world pepper is the king of spices. Britain, which imports more than five thousand tons a year, is one of the few countries where white pepper is preferred to black. Both come from the same plant, white pepper from matured berries with the outer skin removed, black pepper from the dried, unripe whole berries.

During their occupation of Indonesia the Japanese, who don't like pepper, destroyed the pepper vines and planted other crops. As a result there was a postwar world shortage. In 1949 London stocks of pepper, normally ten thousand tons, were down to one ton. Pepper pots disappeared from restaurants. In the spring of 1950 a vanload of pepper was stolen in the East End; its retail value was £4,000. By 1951 pepper reached a world record wholesale price of £70 a hundredweight, and housewives were refusing to buy it at 2s. 6d. an ounce.

"Pepper is as good as gold or diamonds for speculation," says Brown. "It is always in demand and it is virtually imperishable."

Financiers who support this belief too keenly have several times tried to corner the pepper market. The last occasion was in 1936, when a gamble on white pepper failed. The market crashed, the speculators went to jail, and Britain lost the leadership of the world spice trade which it had held since the early days of the East India Company.

THE END

Spendlove began sketching out the details on paper—and already Captain Fell was convinced that Hornblower's brilliant scheme was his own

Hornblower and the Spanish Slaver

by C. S. FORESTER

ILLUSTRATED BY WILLIAM LITTLE

For a moment the flying schooner was at rest—in a harbour ringed by steel. Now came the daring plan to clip her wings

FURY, helpless fury showed on the face of Captain Sir Thomas Fell as he turned to Rear-Admiral Lord Hornblower. It was with an obvious effort that he refrained from a torrent of blasphemy.

"It's. . . . It's . . ." he spluttered.

"It's enough to madden a saint," said Hornblower.

Indeed it was. Twenty miles to the windward of the Spanish West Indian port of San Juan, the frigate Clorinda had been ideally stationed to intercept the slave ship Estrella del Sur—the Star of the South. But the Estrella had dodged neatly round her and won a clear run to port.

In accordance with navy practice, Sir Thomas Fell, the flag captain, and not his admiral, had been in command of Clorinda during the action. And for Fell the affair had been a double disaster. He had lost the £500 which would have been his share of the head money for the freed slaves. Worse, his failure might cost him his command.

Later that day, Clorinda and Estrella lay together in San Juan harbour. Here the British had no right to touch the Spanish slaver. But Hornblower had his own ideas about that.

Slowly at first; then more rapidly, a plan formed in his mind. Looking out at the Estrella across the darkening harbour, Hornblower came suddenly to a decision.

"Spendlove!" he snapped to his secretary, curt with excitement. "Come below with me."

PART TWO

The Admiral Shares His Plot

DOWN in the big stern cabin it was oppressively hot. Hornblower threw himself into his chair; Spendlove stood looking at him keenly, as Hornblower was well aware. Spendlove could be in no doubt that his temperamental commander-in-chief had much on his mind.

Yet even Spendlove was surprised at the scheme that was sketched out to him, and at the orders he received. He even ventured to protest.

"My Lord . . ." he said.

"Carry out your orders, Mr. Spendlove. Not another word."

"Aye, aye, My Lord."

Spendlove left the cabin, with Hornblower sitting there alone, waiting. The minutes passed slowly—precious minutes; there were few to spare—before the knock that he expected came on the door. It was Fell, entering with every appearance of nervousness.

"My Lord, have you a few minutes to spare?"

"Always a pleasure to receive you, Sir Thomas."

"But this is unusual, I fear, My Lord. I have a suggestion to make—an unusual suggestion."

"Suggestions are always welcome, too, Sir Thomas. Please sit down and tell me. We have an hour at least before we go ashore to meet the captain-general. I am most interested in anything you have to say."

Fell sat bolt upright in his chair, his hands clutching the arms. He swallowed twice. It gave Hornblower no pleasure to see a man who had faced steel and lead and imminent death apprehensive before him; it made him feel uncomfortable.

"My Lord . . ." began Fell, and swallowed again.

"You have all my attention, Sir Thomas," said Hornblower gently.

"It has occurred to me," said Fell, growing more fluent with each word until at last he spoke in a rush, "that we still might have a chance at the Estrella."

"Really, Sir Thomas? Nothing could give me greater pleasure, if it were possible. I would like to hear what you suggest."

"Well, My Lord, she'll sail tomorrow, most likely at dawn, with the land breeze. Tonight we might—we might fix some kind of drogue to her bottom. She's no more than a knot or two faster than we are. We could follow her out and catch her at sea. . . ."

"This is brilliant, Sir Thomas. Really ingenious—but nothing more than could be expected of a seaman of your reputation, let me add."

"You are too kind, My Lord." There was a struggle only too perceptible in Fell's expression, and he hesitated before he went on at last: "It

Continued on page 22

"May I present," said Ayora, "the captain of the schooner which you pursued today"

IN SHORT

Straight Talking

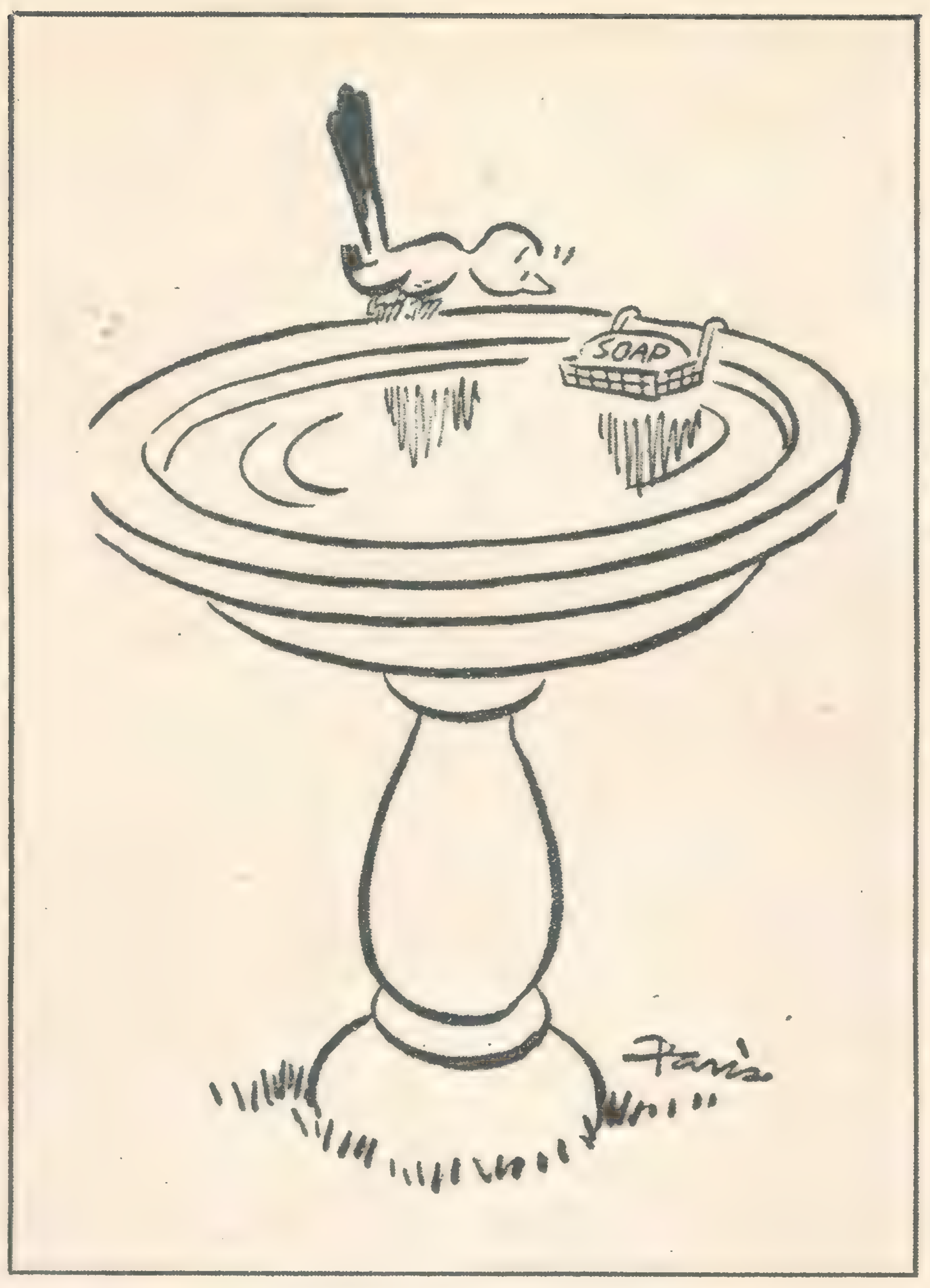
Does lipstick make you look pretty?
That's the idea.
Why doesn't Daddy use it?
Men don't need to.
Are they pretty enough without it?
Men don't want to look pretty, only ladies.
Would I look pretty with lipstick?
You're pretty enough now.
Were you pretty when you were little?
Tremendously pretty.
When did you get ugly? I said when did you get ugly?
I can't answer you if you talk silly. Lipstick's to make you look pretti-*er*, not just pretty. And you never say ladies are ugly.
Are all ladies pretty?
Some more than others.
Do they get prettier with lipstick?
Yes.
Is Aunt Moira prettier than you?
What do you think?
She's got more lipstick. I said——.
Has she? You're in my light.
Why are you putting it on just now?
To look pretty for Daddy.
Doesn't he like you without it?
Of course he does. But if you love a person you like to look pretty for him.
Do you love the man at the bank, then? I said do you love——.

LIONEL DAVIDSON

Just Published

In TV . . . everybody slaps on the sentimentality, the old ladies who are seventy-nine that day and the little dog nobody wants to see put away. Those are the really successful things on TV: not the things everybody likes, but the things nobody could possibly dislike.

ALLAN PRIOR in *The One-Eyed Monster*, a novel about television published this week by Bodley Head



My Favourite Gag

Three Teddy Boys decided to play a joke on the local pawnbroker. The first one rang up and said: "Can I speak to Cecil?" The pawnbroker replied: "This is Mr. Gold, and there's nobody called Cecil here." And he banged down the phone.

A few minutes later, the second Teddy Boy rang up and said: "Hallo, is that Gold's the Pawnbrokers? Right, I want to speak to Cecil."

By now old man Gold was getting really steamed up. "Look" he snorted, "I just told another fellow this is Gold's the Pawnbrokers, and there ain't no Cecil here—so, for pity's sake, stop wasting my time."

Another few minutes passed. Then the third Teddy Boy got on the blower and said: "Hallo, is that Mr. Gold?" "Yes," came the gruff reply. "Oh, good show. Well, this is Cecil speaking—any messages for me?"

DEREK ROY says: "I reckon we're all a bit ticklish at the funny-bone when it comes to a really effective practical joke. This is the best example I know of one put into words."

Starke's Guide To Hobbies And Pastimes

"Inclement weather need be no bar to the enjoyment of some very popular outdoor recreations"

Other People's Letters

In 1938, when I entered Parliament and gazed for the first time at close quarters at men—there were only a very few women then—whose names made news, their actions, their speeches and their expressions left an indelible memory.

In those days, Churchill, a rather discredited politician, would come to the House only when a big debate had been arranged. . . . On these occasions the Chamber would be packed, and Winston, arriving just after Questions, would come in unsmiling, lower lip jutting forward, head down, shoulders bent, slowly walk towards the front bench below the gangway. This favourite bench would be tightly packed and nobody offered to vacate a seat—as Hinchingbrooke does today—or even edge along a little. That did not deter Winston; he turned round and with his posterior bulldozed a place for himself. . . .

I recall Nancy Astor, who sat behind him on one of these occasions, flicking him on the head with her order paper. He turned round fiercely and spat something out at her. I remember wishing that I could have heard that undoubtedly colourful comment. . . .

Who wrote this letter? See foot of column.

Spiders

You watch the way
Spiders come trundling out
From among the leaves when flies are about,
Then say they don't remind you
Of tars afloat
Who climb the rigging to find what's rocking
the boat.
That's not poetical,
It's common sense,
As you can determine
Leaning over a fence.

WILLIAM CLARKE

Foreign Affairs

Men going for a haircut to Californian barber Jim Ausman are asked, "Would you like a Cutnik?" It's a new style which leaves only four tufts of hair on the head resembling the antennae of the Sputnik.

"Your turn to take the wheel," a man told his wife as he stopped their car at a lonely spot during a long drive from Boston, Massachusetts, to St. John, New Brunswick. The car shot off while he was still outside. Seventy-five miles later she reported to the Canadian Mounties. They "got" their man twenty-four hours later—in a motel.

Television viewers in Tirano, northern Italy, suffered mysterious blackouts on their screens. They always occurred around cinema opening time. Police found that the mile-long cable to the town's communal aerial was being cut. They traced the sabotage to the local picture house proprietor.

Idol Moment

I idolize my son, and when
He comes indoors from play,
He has what other idols have,
I notice: feet of clay.

RICHARD ARMOUR

The letter was written by Dr. Edith Summerskill to her daughter Shirley. From "Letters To My Daughter," published by Heinemann.

A JOHN BULL Book Extract complete in this issue

NURSE IS A NEIGHBOUR

The warm, humorous and romantic story of my hectic life as a district nurse

by JOANNA JONES

JOHN BULL PHOTOGRAPH BY ARTHUR WHITTINGTON

It began with the telephone jangling in the middle of the night. I groped for the receiver and said: "Nurse Jones here."

There was no reply. I repeated my little piece of identification, waited a moment, and then added: "Press Button A." People ringing the district nurse in an emergency often forget such little formalities.

A man's voice came through with a rush: "You'd better be quick. I think it's nearly here."

Then he rang off.

I pushed myself out of bed, and thought it over while I dressed.

There are quite a few square miles in my territory, and at any given time there are usually a number of women expecting babies. Whom did he mean?

I selected Mrs. Prebble. She had already had eight children, and the last four or five had, according to the reports of my predecessor, come swiftly and with very little fuss. Nevertheless, this had not prevented Mr. Prebble from being thoroughly distraught during these last few weeks.

I yawned, went downstairs and checked my midwifery bag.

Quietly I opened the back door and went out. It was a clear night. I drove down Broadbarrow Hill and through the village.

There were a few lights ahead. The one to the left was the one for which I was heading. I drove up to the leaning gate, backed on to the grass and stopped.

The front door opened as I went up the path, and Mr. Prebble held up a paraffin lamp to light the way.

I stepped into the narrow hall, and my feet crackled on newspaper.

It is one of the rules that patients should spread newspaper on a chair so that the nurse may put her bag on it.

It is meant as a health precaution in houses which are not as clean as they might be, and the risk of contamination of the nurse's bag must be avoided, but to avoid giving offence, the rule has to be observed by *all* patients, no matter how spotless their homes. Unfortunately, the Prebbles were over-zealous. The hall was paved with newspapers. There were newspapers on every tread of the stairs, and the bedroom looked like the back-number department of a national daily.

I accidentally bumped into Mr. Prebble when going to my bag to get out the disinfectant and said to him: "Perhaps you'll leave it to me now. You'll be in the front room if I want you, I suppose?"

"No," he said with pale determination. "I want to watch."

"*What?*"

From the bed, Mrs. Prebble said apologetically: "He's been reading the papers. They say it does a husband good."

I wondered which newspaper was responsible for filling Mr. Prebble with this belated enthusiasm and said: "Are you sure you want to? It's a very fine thing, but some people find it a bit of a shock."

"They say it makes a new bond between

Continued on page 28

Mr. Mitt raised his head slightly so that he could squint at the scene. Albert was howl

SETTLED OUT OF COURT

by LESLIE BONNET

ILLUSTRATED BY RICHARD O. ROSE

No judge could ever try this case of landlord versus tenant. This was a delicate matter—for fighting men

MR. MITT assumed as aggressive a stance as middle age would permit him. He was a big man, heavy-faced, and his lush and drooping moustache gave him an aspect of almost oriental ferocity.

Albert Hand doffed his coat and left it lying untidily on the grass. Then, as an afterthought, he removed his hat, the bowler hat that places the wearer instantly as an officer in the Brigade of Guards or as a small farmer. Albert's height, which was insignificant, and the entire lack of martial ardour on a face which bore the marks of half a lifetime's disappointments, indicated that he was of the small farmer class.

Having completed his preparations, Albert looked across at me. "May the best man win," he said, as if he did not really think it likely.

Then, without appearing to look at Frederick Mitt, he moved in quickly and jumped off the ground nervously to gain, I suppose, height and reach. As he jumped, with both eyes tight shut, he gave Mr. Mitt such a wild thump with his fist that the bigger man fell, all in one piece, like a dynamited statue, flat on his back.

Supine, badly shaken, his hard breathing

ing and hopping energetically. "My arm's broke!" he was wailing. "My arm's broke!"

causing his moustache to blow, waving like seaweed, Mr. Mitt must have felt a keen sense of injustice as he reflected upon this instant fight which he had lost before he had begun.

Whatever his feelings, however, Frederick Mitt was content for the moment to remain where he was. Uncomfortable as it might be, with the earth's wetness chilling his back, it was at least safe. Once on his feet, that little fighting cock might make another set at him.

Mr. Mitt would never have thought it of Albert Hand, such a meek, complaining little old chap. He was getting his breath back now. When would it be prudent to get to his feet again?

"Can't understand it," he groaned reproachfully. "Known him all my life, too."

It wasn't until he spoke that Frederick Mitt realized that there was a lot of noise going on. Listening now, he realized that somebody else was in trouble, too. Albert Hand was lamenting loudly. His shrill cries called upon the heavens to witness a bad case of undeserved misfortune.

Frederick Mitt raised his head very slightly so that he could squint at the scene without giving the impression that he was eager to renew the fight. Albert was howling and hopping energetically; while the only other person in sight (it was me, in fact) did his best to soothe him.

"My arm's broke! My arm's broke!" Albert was wailing.

I tried to explain that it seemed that he had only put his shoulder out. If he would give me his hand, and allow me to place my foot against his chest, I felt sure that a hard thrust and a quick pull would put it to rights in a jiffy.

This suggestion found no favour. My diagnosis was rejected. "My arm's broke!" continued to be the burden of Albert Hand's complaints.

Apparently reassured by this new situation, Mr. Mitt clambered clumsily to his feet. Seeing that Albert Hand was quite defenceless, he had the courage to thrust himself before him.

"Want any more?" asked Mr. Mitt.

Albert looked at him piteously. "Just my luck," he whimpered. There was always a bit of a whine in his voice.

"Luck be blowed," said Mr. Mitt with contempt. "I just rode the punch, that's what I did."

"Now my arm's broke."

"Somebody has to lose."

"Who's lost?" shouted Albert, apparently forgetting all about his pain. He pranced up to Mitt with magnificent ferocity. "Want me to break the other arm on you? Like to ride this punch?"

Mr. Mitt placed himself out of reach very smartly indeed. "Easy does it. Easy does it," he puffed, making soothing gestures.

Albert blinked sadly at where his foe had been, and shook his head doubtfully. Deprived of his prey, he returned to the topic which had been occupying his mind so much. "Oh, my arm!" he whined.

Frederick approached him again, though somewhat warily. He was anxious, eager to be magnanimous.

"Come along, Albert," he said in his big way. Let's call it a draw. That's fair, isn't it?"

He appealed to me. I nodded. Albert made no protest. With a disconsolate smile on his face he allowed us to lead him away.

And that was how it came about that Albert Hand pays five shillings a week for the village store one month, and then £2 a week for the next. . . .

Of course I ought never to have been there at

Continued on page 26

Come to sunny Sahara . . .

by RENÉ LECLER

Two women are blazing trails to the world's strangest holiday haunts: an oasis, a lonely isle—or a Pacific gambling den

In her London office travel agent Marguerite Winsor (left) discusses a holiday with two clients. Below: Ena Molesworth, her partner, leaves to find new contacts in South America

JOHN BULL PHOTOGRAPHS BY ARTHUR WHITTINGTON

When the headmistress of a Midlands school told travel agent Marguerite Winsor two years ago that she wanted to spend Christmas somewhere sunny, quiet and unusual, Miss Winsor produced a map of the Sahara Desert and suggested an oasis.

The woman agreed and together they planned the trip: she would take a plane to Algiers, a private aircraft to a small French Army outpost and spend a day on a rickety truck to the oasis of Ghardaia.

Miss Winsor says: "We told her that she would certainly be the only English person there, but we were wrong; the first person she met was air ace Douglas Bader, who was there on oil business."

The client so enjoyed the strange surroundings that she swore she would never again go where "everybody" goes. The following year she booked a trip to the Trucial Oman sheikhdoms of the Persian Gulf.

Strange places and strange people are Miss Winsor's speciality. Once she arranged an expensive European tour for a wealthy American woman and was taken aback to hear some months later that the woman wanted to repeat the journey. During her tour she had made friends with a dog in Amsterdam, and was now flying back to see it.

She asked Miss Winsor to book the entire dining-room of an Amsterdam hotel, order a meal and make sure that the dog would be served with its own steak on a platter.

When, a few months later, a family of Cuban millionaires cabled her for travel arrangements to Europe and specified that they wanted import permits for twenty-four live guinea fowls, she complied. "I just had to see that. I waited for them personally at London Airport and saw father, mother and young daughter arrive holding a cage with the birds inside.

"It appeared that the daughter was delicate: she had never eaten anything else but breast of guinea fowl."

A tall, witty Londoner of forty-six, Marguerite Winsor and her partner, fifty-two year old Ena Molesworth, run International Services, Ltd., which is one of the most unusual travel agencies in Britain.

They have specialized in the lucrative business of sending famous, rich or eccentric people to the world's most unlikely places. Among their clients are Sir Anthony Eden, Sarah Churchill, Alec Guinness, Richard Greene, A. J. Cronin, the Sitwells and Joan Crawford.

Difficulties rarely deter them. One seventy-five year old Canadian woman, a chronic invalid suffering from leukemia, told them one day that she was dying and wished to return to her birthplace in British Columbia. The partners booked three seats on a plane, two for the stretcher and a third for a private nurse, and laid on a supply of oxygen, hot water bottles and essential medicines.

The plane was due to land first at Amsterdam and then there was a waiting time of several hours. Miss Winsor flew there and toured the streets near the airport looking for a nursing home where her client might rest. In the only accessible one the stairs were too steep to climb with a stretcher so she made arrangements for the woman to be accommodated in the downstairs maternity room.

Back in London she alerted her agents in the other stopping places, Gander, Vancouver and Victoria, engaged doctors and nurses to stand by, and even laid on facilities in places where the plane might be forced to land.

"Apart from one place where she failed to get her hot water bottles refilled, everything went according to plan and the old lady got home safely."

Miss Winsor and her partner abhor the words "organized travel" and insist that they disorganize it instead. When a Canadian engineer recently cabled them his intention to visit sixteen power stations in France, Britain, Italy, Switzerland and Austria in three weeks, they combed London for a chauffeur who spoke French and Italian, found a suitable car and mapped out a detailed itinerary down to shortcuts and eating places.

They wrote to every station, booked every hotel and arranged to have the car mechanically tested and washed every night. When the Canadian returned to London he paid a £1,400 bill without a murmur.

"Then we sent the chauffeur on holiday," says Miss Winsor. "After five thousand miles of hard driving he was exhausted."

Two writers who wanted to spend six months on St. Helena found that the partners had the only large-scale map of the island available in London, and could also book their passage, describe local weather conditions, recommend accommodation and even a servant.

A few months ago a man told the partners that he wanted to visit Macao, the gambling den of the Pacific. "We did not want to boast that we ourselves had just returned from there," recalls Miss Winsor, "but in ten minutes we booked his trip and his hotel and gave him a plan of the town."

When they told him that for a small extra charge he could have a cabin aboard the Hongkong-Macao ferry, with silk sheets, a vacuum flask full of hot tea and a morning call, the man gave up questioning them.

Both partners revel in making travel arrangements. Their first customer one morning recently booked a return trip to Bournemouth, the second called in to plan a £1,200 round-the-world trip and the third, an eccentric and wealthy woman, booked a journey to an obscure village near Aachen, Germany.

One customer was an elderly clerk in a City office who had saved up all his life to go on an extensive tour of North and South America. "He was a dear old chap," recalls Miss Molesworth, "and he had read every guide book on the area. He was even going to see Inca ruins."

The man called every day for six weeks to see how the plans were progressing, and when they were complete he brought £900 in pound notes wrapped in newspaper. Within two weeks he was back at the office. He had caught a slight disease aboard ship and some "kindly" people in Canada had shipped him home on the first available boat.

"We all felt terribly sorry for him," says Miss Molesworth, "and we managed to get some of his money refunded."

Some months ago, two California University professors who had never been abroad before wrote to say that they would like to be "held by the hand on paper" through a £1,600 European tour. When Miss Winsor eventually forwarded their travel papers by airmail the

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One man pinioned Brierly's arms. The other aimed an automatic at Hughes and said evenly: "Come in . . . but not too close"

CASTAWAY

by ROBERT MURPHY

They were a vicious crew of thieves and murderers. And he could prove it . . . if they'd only let him get back alive

BEHIND the little group of buildings that were the company's trading post, the Baffin Island hills rose to bleak and stony ridges that seemed as empty of life as the surface of the moon. But the two men on the front steps of the post manager's house were not looking at the hills. They were looking down the long slope towards the grey waters of Cumberland Sound, where the desolation was broken only by a ship anchored a mile offshore and the motor lighter which had left her side a while before and was now approaching the shingly beach.

"That's the last load," said Roberts, the manager of the post. "I dare say you'll be glad to get back to civilization again. I'll walk down with you."

"I'll be glad enough to be heading home," the other man said. He was Griffin Hughes, a tall, vigorous, grey-eyed man, the company's representative on the ship out in the sound. She had been hired at the last moment to service three posts, because the company's own ship had been wrecked before reaching them. "Won't you come aboard for a drink?"

"I don't think so, thanks," Roberts said. "I don't much like your captain and his precious mates, and they're probably in a sweat to get out. Freeze-up could be any time now."

"The company doesn't like them very much either," Hughes said, "but we had to get to you before freeze-up, and there wasn't anybody else around."

"They're an odd crew," Roberts said, as they started down the hill towards the beach. "How do you get along with them?"

"I've managed so far," Hughes said, "but they're a surly lot. I—look, isn't that your clerk? He's coming up here."

"Mr. Roberts," said the clerk as he met them, "they've delivered us five boxes short, and they say there's no more. And they want Mr. Hughes to hurry, before the tide sets out."

Roberts glanced at Hughes and back to the clerk. "Which boxes?" he asked.

"The most expensive stuff," the clerk said. "Including the cigarettes and our personal supply of whisky for the year. Now they wouldn't have forgotten that in the south when they loaded?"

"It seems unlikely," Roberts said, and looked at the snowy ground for a moment. "Go back

ILLUSTRATED BY NEVILLE DEAR

and see that all the furs get on the lighter and are properly signed for. Tell them Mr. Hughes will be along right away."

The clerk turned away and Roberts stared after him. Hughes made a sound half-way between a sigh and a curse. "And I'd hoped there wouldn't be trouble. I didn't check the cargo myself, Robbie. It had all been crammed on board when I got there, but I'm sure it was all there."

"So am I," Roberts said. "Were you ashore the night you were at Frobisher Bay? You stopped there just before here, didn't you?"

"Yes," Hughes said. "And I stayed ashore all night with the post manager, to get away from the ship for a bit."

"There's a new independent fur post farther up the bay at Frobisher," Roberts said, "and I've heard some odd talk about it. It could be that they made a deal with the trader and eased the stuff to him after dark, when you weren't aboard. Do you want me to hold the ship and radio the Mounties to make a search at Frobisher?"

"No, Robbie, that wouldn't help. If the stuff's there, I'm sure it's well hidden by now. The company would be sued and the blasted ship might be trapped here until next summer. No—we'll have to settle this in Montreal, if we can. Let's get on down."

At the beach the Eskimos had all gone off to the warehouse with their loads; the hands from the ship stood by the lighter, and the second mate, Brierly, squat, red-headed, walked impatiently up and down.

"I'd thank you to shake a leg, Mr. Hughes," he said ungraciously. "The tide's due to change."

Hughes nodded at him, shook hands with Roberts, and jumped aboard. When the lighter reached the ship, he climbed over the side and went to his cabin, chilled from the cold wind. He took a hot shower, and sat down on his bunk, thinking about how he was going to talk to the captain.

He was more concerned about his position than he had let Roberts see. He would be the only handy witness, when they got home, to what he felt was a piece of brazen thievery, and he was under complete control of the thieves. They had thousands of miles to go, and a lot of it was through the loneliest and most inhospitable seas in the world. Anything could happen. A great variety of accidents could occur.

A knock at the door startled him. "Yes?" he asked.

"Captain would like to see you on the bridge."

Hughes went out and up to the bridge. Nobody was about; the crew were at dinner. Nobody was on the bridge either. He went into the wheelhouse. The quartermaster was at the wheel; one of the seamen stood behind and to one side of him, and Hughes noticed, without thinking about it, that the man was in his stockinged feet.

Hommedieu, the captain, and the first mate, Turpin, were standing together in the far corner. Turpin was a stocky, sullen man, and Captain Hommedieu was the most unlikely fellow for his name that Hughes had ever seen; he looked more like a great spider than a man of God. He had a short, stout body and inordinately long, thin arms and legs.

"Ah, Mr. Hughes," Hommedieu said. "They tell me the stuff checked out short ashore."

"Didn't you check when you loaded the lighter?" Hughes asked.

Hommedieu looked at him and looked away. "Mr. Turpin?" he asked.

Turpin looked at Hughes. "No need," he said. "It was the last lot."

Hommedieu said: "You think they short-loaded us down south?"

"It's immaterial what I think," Hughes said. "It was short, and what I think won't alter that. But it can all be taken care of when we get home."

Hommedieu and Turpin glanced at each other. Hommedieu said: "Ah. Thank you, Mr. Hughes. I won't hold you from your dinner any longer."

Hughes went out of the wheelhouse and grasped the rails of the bridge ladder. He was so engrossed in thinking things out that he missed the top step and dropped the length of his arms. Almost immediately there was a yell and a man fell over and passed him, crashing down on the deck below. Hughes clawed himself up the ladder and stared. The man sprawled below him was the seaman from the wheelhouse—the one without shoes.

He looked very dead. Hughes turned and started for the wheelhouse just as the captain ran round the corner.

"What the hell was that noise?" Hommedieu demanded.

Hughes took Hommedieu's arm and pulled him to the railing. The captain began to screech, "Brierly! Brierly!" almost before he looked down, and Hughes saw that his hands were shaking badly. Hughes moved round him, made his way carefully down the ladder, walked wide of the prostrate seaman and turned towards his cabin as all the doors leading out on deck began to spill out members of the crew.

Half an hour later there was another knock at Hughes's door. He hesitated before he opened it, for he was still feeling shaken. The conversation on the bridge now seemed to him no more than an excuse to get him up there so he could be pushed down.

The knock came again, and he opened the door. Hughes stood aside, and the captain came in and sat down on the bunk.

"A dreadful thing, Mr. Hughes," he said. "Thank God he didn't fall on to you and carry you down."

"I fell myself, or he'd have had me," Hughes said. "He seemed very close behind me, Captain."

"I sent him after you," Hommedieu said, shifting his feet. "I thought of a question. A question."

"And what was that?"

"I forget, Mr. Hughes. With what's happened it's clean gone out of my head." He swallowed. "He's in bad shape, Mr. Hughes. We radioed for a doctor. A plane should be bringing us one before dark."

Hughes's reaction to this was an immediate feeling of immense relief; he could take the plane back and be rid of them all for good. But then, on the heels of this feeling, there came a sense of confusion, because Hommedieu hadn't acted like a murderer.

"Ah," Hommedieu said suddenly, into the silence. "A very bad voyage for me, Mr. Hughes. A good man at the edge of death, and the shortage. You didn't load the ship. We didn't load it. The company was in a rush, and us just back from a hard trip and scattered to our homes for a minute. Some contractors did it. There might have been pilferage, but we are the ones that will be branded as thieves."

Hughes's confusion deepened. He had got to the ship so late that he didn't know whether a company man had checked the loading or not, and now he cursed himself for not doing it on the voyage up. He was almost ready to believe that he had been a fool all the way, with his damned suspicions.

He stared at Hommedieu, and Hommedieu stared back. Hommedieu suddenly leaned forward, licked his lips, and said in a wheedling tone: "Mr. Hughes, a list—a real list made on board—would settle everything for all of us. Did you go into the hold and make one on the voyage up?"

Hughes suddenly found himself right back where he had started, or in even a worse position; for, if he had such a list, they had to have it.

He said: "No. I haven't been into the hold, Captain."

Hommedieu looked at him with obvious disbelief. "That was careless of you, Mr. Hughes," he said softly.

"Nevertheless——" Hughes began, and there was a knock at the door. "Come in," he said.

A seaman looked in. "They want you on the bridge, Captain," he said. "There's a fog making up, and it might give us trouble meeting the plane. . . ."

The ship was lying with her engines stopped. Hughes looked out of the porthole to find the fog thicker. He went on deck and saw that the searchlight was on, directed up into the air.

He returned to his cabin. He tried to read but couldn't concentrate, and finally got up and looked out of the porthole again.

It was a good deal darker now. The fog seemed thicker still and snow was falling. But worse than any of these things was the fact that they had turned the searchlight off.

They had apparently given the plane up. It must have turned back until the weather cleared.

The trapped feeling moved a little closer to him. He couldn't sit in his cabin any longer. He went into the passage and on into the saloon. The steward, a perpetually sniffling Greek called Jimmy, was clearing the remains of a meal from before the second mate, Brierly, and serving him with coffee.

Brierly looked up and, to Hughes's astonishment, almost smiled at him.

"Sit down, Mr. Hughes," Brierly said, with unusual good nature, "and have a cup of Jimmy's liquid mud."

"Thank you," Hughes said, and sat down. "How's the sailor?"

"Not good," Brierly said, "and his prospects ain't much better. Didn't you hear the damned plane's down?"

"Down?" Hughes exclaimed, startled. "You mean it's crashed?"

"It's crashed, right enough; it's down in the hills and they've told us to stand by and send a man in to find it in the morning. They can't get Air Rescue off in this weather." He drank. "They know where it is, and we're the closest."

Jimmy set the coffee pot before Hughes, who filled his cup almost without looking at it. "But how can they ever find it?" he asked.

"We're in luck," Brierly said. "There's a valley runs in to where they think it is, and our man can follow that. And our man," he said, with another grin, which somehow reminded Hughes of a shark's, "will probably be me." He stood up. "Well, I've got to get back to the bridge. We're going to try to anchor close in and get an early start tomorrow."

He went out, and Hughes stared after him. . . .

The snow had stopped falling by

A MEAL TO REMEMBER

by Sir Albert Richardson

I have attended many dinners celebrating notable occasions, but undoubtedly the most exciting was the Royal Academy dinner in 1949—the first that had been held since the outbreak of war. These dinners, held on the eve of the Academy's summer exhibition, are impressive affairs and I had eagerly looked forward to the evening.

We had an excellent meal, which began with hors d'oeuvres, followed by a superb dish of sole cooked in white wine. A lively discussion on the future of British art went on at my table during the succeeding courses, and then I sat back in my chair, prepared to spend a peaceful hour or so listening to the speeches, which were to be broadcast.

The Duke of Gloucester, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Chief Justice Goddard, Winston Churchill, Lord Montgomery and Philip Noel-Baker all spoke. Then it was the turn of the president, Sir Alfred Munnings. He looked round the room and, in a quiet voice, launched into one of the most angry attacks on contemporary art ever heard.

I sat up in my chair and listened, while Sir Alfred spoke scathingly of modern painters as "young jugglers . . . making violent blows at nothing." He went on to refer to the "foolish daubs" of the French artists Picasso and Matisse and aroused his listeners by attacking the Arts Council and the Directors of the Tate Gallery.

Then something happened which I have never witnessed at an Academy banquet before or since—someone interrupted the president. I admired Sir Alfred when he turned angrily on the heckler and continued undaunted with his provocative address.

The atmosphere in the room had grown tense, and the drama was increased when suddenly it began to rain. Water beat on to the glass roof of the gallery in which we were dining, almost drowning the speaker's words. Some drops even came through the roof and fell on to the candles, which spluttered madly. The scene reminded me of a circus.

The storm outside increased the excitement in the room, and artists near me who disagreed with Sir Alfred's attack began to interrupt more vociferously. Eventually, two dissenters were escorted from the room by uniformed attendants. I could hardly believe that I was, in fact, at an Academy banquet.

At last the president sat down and I discussed his speech with my neighbours. Meanwhile the B.B.C. switchboard was being flooded with telephone calls from listeners either agreeing with or criticizing Sir Alfred.

Churchill stood up for the second time that evening and commented on the president's "strong—very strong" views on art. Gradually the excitement began to subside, but I was disappointed when the party eventually broke up.

How to cook sole in white wine

Ingredients: 2 medium sized soles, whole or filleted; salt and pepper, a little grated nutmeg, finely chopped parsley, a little butter, ½ pint white wine, 4-5 large sliced onions, frying oil, lemon juice.

Sprinkle salt, pepper, nutmeg and parsley over the fish. Put in an oven dish with dabs of butter and the white wine. Cook in a moderate oven—350 deg. F., gas No. 3-4—for thirty minutes.

Meanwhile, fry the onions in oil until golden brown. Drain. Arrange the onions round the fish. Sprinkle over more parsley and a little lemon juice.

morning, but the fog held several hundred feet above the water; the tops of the hills were cut off. They had anchored about three-quarters of a mile from shore, and as Hughes came on deck he found the captain leaning over the rail.

"Ah, Mr. Hughes," Hommedieu said. "We're just getting a boat away."

Below, in the water, the boat was showing off. Brierly sat in the bow, with a rifle slung over his shoulder and a *parka* and *mukluks* on. In the boat there was a sled loaded with packages.

"There's the spot, Mr. Hughes," the captain said, and pointed to a wide valley ashore. "Brierly follows that for twenty miles or so and comes to a high sugar-loaf where the valley splits. The plane came down there."

Hughes looked at Hommedieu. He appeared to be more relaxed this morning, and his eyes were steadier.

"I don't like these seas, Mr. Hughes," Hommedieu went on. "The glass don't look too good, and a bit of nasty weather now. . . ."

"Do you think there's a chance they're alive, and he'll find them?"

"Oh, they're alive, Mr. Hughes. The pilot talked with his headquarters by radio after the plane was down. He and the doc are alive and sound or I'd have to send more than one man to fetch them. I gave Brierly three days in and out, and that will do it."

Hommedieu turned away. Hughes stood watching the boat for a while, a small white dot in the distance, and then went back to his cabin again. He didn't envy Brierly his trip through that barren and freezing wilderness. . . .

"My husband's fitting a new washer to one of the taps"

All the next day passed in fretting idleness. On the morning after there was a knock on the door as Hughes awoke.

It was Hommedieu and the first mate. "Ah, Mr. Hughes," the captain said. "We have a bit of trouble. Do you mind if we come in?"

They took the two chairs and Hughes sat on the bunk. He noticed that the ship was rolling more. The wind had picked up.

"Now, then," the captain said. "You see what the wind's at, Mr. Hughes, and it will be worse. We've got to move south a bit, to better holding ground. I've got a favour to ask you."

All Hughes's distrust of them suddenly returned.

"We've got to move the ship," Hommedieu said. "I can't wait for Brierly to come back here. And I can't spare any of my crew to send out to him, with a blow coming up and maybe freeze-up on top of it, so would you go out and meet him and direct him to the new anchorage, Mr. Hughes?"

Hughes had a wild impulse to shout refusal at them. If they got him off the ship and into that desolation. . . .

Hommedieu said: "You don't have to go, Mr. Hughes, and nobody can make you. You can leave Brierly and a couple of maybe badly shaken men to struggle up and down a frozen coast looking for us; you can do that, and nobody will be the wiser. Except us."

"Until we get 'ome," Turpin said.

Hughes realized then why Hommedieu had brought the mate with him; he had a witness. And they had him trapped; he had to go. Perhaps the change in them had been genuine, and perhaps the seaman who had caused all this, and the three officers themselves, were completely innocent; it was immaterial now.

He took a deep breath and said: "I'll go. . . ."

* * *

The snow made walking difficult. It covered the small rocks which rolled under him when he tried to hurry, and he wanted to hurry, in case of more fog or more snow.

Hughes, like Brierly, had a little sled with an oil-burning stove, food, dry clothes, a sleeping bag and a tarpaulin lashed on it. He took the rifle off his back and put that on the sled too.

The valley climbed gradually, but it wasn't hard to follow. When he met Brierly, they were to go back to a cross-valley marked by a triple-notched hill, and follow that valley south to a stream. The stream would bring them out to the new anchorage, Hommedieu had said. The captain had drawn him a sketch map showing all this.

He plodded on. The footing improved and he made better time; he picked up his pace until he moved at a trot.

Late in the day, sweating despite the chill, he came to the cross-valley marked by its strangely notched hill. Brierly wasn't there, nor was there any sign of him in the long reach ahead.

Brierly, two full days ahead, should have been this far back, or farther, by now. Hughes stood for a long moment irresolute, and then decided to go on. He had set himself a gruelling pace before, but he increased it. His breath whistled between his teeth and stabbed his lungs. His legs had lost all sensation, but he drove himself on.

Then it began to snow. The flakes were white and thick and whirled past him on the wind; they blotted everything out beyond a radius of a few yards and he immediately lost his sense of direction.

As he stood there immobilized, a shiver went up his back, for there was no telling how long it would last. There was nothing to do but endure it, and hope that it was a passing squall.

After what seemed hours to him, it tailed off into an intermittent fall of scattered flakes and he could see again.

As the grey light began to fail he came to the forking of the valley and the sugar-loaf hill. At the base of the hill, a fire that smouldered a little had melted some of the snow, and out of this thrust up the twisted metal of the plane. There was nothing else, and for a moment he was too bewildered to realize that Brierly had returned another way.

Hughes stared at the wreckage in a stupor of disbelief. Then he looked all around. The snow had covered any tracks there might have been and stretched away in a mocking smoothness. He knew then what they had done to him.

For an instant he was on the edge of panic, but it was succeeded by a cold, calm fury. With it came a thought he hadn't had before: that Hommedieu hadn't believed him when he said he'd fallen down the ladder, but thought he'd seen the seaman coming at him in time and disposed of him. Thus the captain had to do away with him as a witness for attempted murder, if not for theft; and events had played into his hands.

He was sure now that the ship had gone north instead of south and that Brierly would meet it there. He clenched his fists as though he held the necks of all three of them, and knew that he had better be right in his estimate, because it would be his last chance to get out. . . .

The light was going now, but he ran to the sled, got the flashlight they'd packed in the sleeping bag. He began making sweeps to find their tracks in some sheltered spot that might give him their starting direction.

He knew his chances were very small, and soon he had to start using the flashlight. But in the end, nearly three hundred yards from the plane, he found what he was looking for along the side of an outcrop of rock that had held off the wind. He raised his head and saw that the sky had now cleared enough to show a few stars, and that there was a bright one he could use for direction.

He went back to the sled and cooked a big meal and swallowed it. Then he changed his socks, put the flashlight in his pocket, took the stove in one hand, put some food in the *parka* bib, slung the rifle over his back and started out. He left the sled and everything else on it, knowing that if he didn't get to the ship he wouldn't need it anyhow.

He trudged off, following the star. When it showed signs of vanishing into the thickening overcast again, he stopped and lined up two cans of food on it. Then he thought of the wind, and lined up two cans of food on that as well. He scraped a rock-sheltered area clear of snow and sat down. The wind was cold and he couldn't keep it out. He ached everywhere and was very tired, but in spite of this and the knowledge that he had the thinnest possible chance of success, he somehow felt buoyant and sure. Deep within himself, beyond the aches and the cold, his courage held.

Presently his head dropped forward and he fell into a fitful sleep. But he got up with the first wan, grey light, stiff and sore, and cooked a meal. He saw from the cans that the wind hadn't changed, and was pleased with that, for it would give him direction. He took up his march again, at a killing pace. For a while his feet hurt so badly that he was afraid they'd give out on him, but presently he forgot them.

The country grew rougher as he got closer to the coast. He slid or fell down hills and clawed his way up others in endless succession, and took chances on the slippery rocks that would have chilled him with a crawling horror if he'd seen anybody else do it. He had become a running and climbing machine, a mad, staring man with clenched teeth, with the breath roaring in his throat.

It was long after noon, after he had fought his way up a precipitous hill and looked down on the valley, that he saw their tracks in the old snow, beyond the fresh, obliterating snow, and his luck had held after all.

He didn't believe it at first, and then a strangled cry came out of him. He began to shake; and then he threw his rifle away and hurled himself down the hill and fell on the tracks. He ran and fell, and scuttled forward on hands and knees and got up and ran again. . . .

He fell many times, and a long time later, when he came round the cliff face and out on the shore where they were standing, it was Brierly who saw him first. Brierly looked and stiffened, and then frantically began to get the slung rifle off his back. The two other men whirled and looked, too. Hughes did the only thing he could: he threw his hands high.

As Brierly got the rifle free and began to swing it up, one of the men with him quickly stepped behind him and pinioned his arms. "Let's wait a minute," he said, "before we start shooting people." The other man pulled out an automatic pistol and pointed it at Hughes. "Come in . . ." he said, "but not too close."

Hughes staggered closer to them with his hands still up, and they began to swim about in his sight. He stopped several feet away, gasping loudly for breath, trying to talk, and then his legs gave way and he sat down.

The man holding the pistol said: "Take it easy, man."

Hughes fought grimly for breath, and finally found enough. "The ship!" he said, for his mind was still fixed on it. "The ship!"

"The ship's right out there," the man said. "The boat's just left her. Do you belong on her too?"

"Ah!" Hughes said. He stared at his hands and didn't recognize their torn and bloody shapelessness. Then he put his head down on his knees and a great blackness swam over him.

After a time it steadied, and he raised his head. "I'm Hughes, the company man," he said. "They——"

"Hughes?" the man with the pistol said. "I'll be triple damned. We had a message from Roberts at the trading post that you might be in a bit of a spot."

"They sent me in to find you and Brierly and take you south," Hughes said. "The ship was to move and we were all to meet her there. But she went north, and Brierly knew it." The memory of the endless miles, the snow and the cold and empty land, waiting and still, filled his head. "They had to lose me in there," he said, "because they tried to kill me, and I knew. Or they thought I did."

The man with the pistol put it back into the holster, looked at Hughes for a moment, and then suddenly turned and walked over to the pinioned Brierly and hit him on the jaw. Brierly's knees buckled.

The first man came back and put a warm arm around Hughes's shoulders. "Don't worry," he said. "You're safe. You're a bit knocked out, but we'll fix that shortly. I'm Doctor Jack Barlow—and this is Nicky Farr, my pilot. Now, can you tell me why they wanted to murder you?"

Hughes told him. "I don't think they planned to kill me at first," he said. "I'm sure they just wanted to knock me out to get the cargo list, if I had it. But then they thought I'd seen the sailor, and panicked, and had to do me in. Your plane went down, and that was their chance. They even gave me a map. There was a river on it; they said that cross-valley ran into it, and we were to follow the river to the ship."

"I hope you kept it," Farr said. "I've flown over this country enough to know there's no river there. I gave them that cross-valley as a reference point." He raised his head as though he had heard something. "Jack!" he said, pointing out.

They all looked and saw the helicopter with its big pontoons, coming low up the sound towards the ship.

"There was one coming into Frobisher by boat," Barlow said. "This one must be it, so they sent it up." He grinned. "It begins to look," he said to Hughes, "as though the righteous now have a quorum. Our visit to your shipmates may be more pleasant for us than for them."

THE END

A man like Aziz

Continued from page 7

to Aziz. But I remember I felt a surge of excitement that followed my understanding of how the Simla plan must have worked.

It was obvious to me now that Dr. Sen had been chosen for the job because, with a pointed beard, he could pass at a quick glance for Aziz, the one Indian who could get near the royal box.

He had come to the bazaar below the Mall, changed into the white uniform and green cummerbund of an A.D.C. *abdar*, climbed the steep stone steps of the alley just opposite the theatre entrance, and waited there till Aziz came out with his tray of drinks for the cast, making his usual detour out of the theatre entrance to the stage door to avoid the crowded passage inside. Then, after a few minutes, Dr. Sen slipped out of the shadows and walked into the theatre by the front entrance, carrying an empty tray and with the cigar box concealed in his loose robes.

Had anybody looked at him closely, Dr. Sen would have been stopped immediately, but the plot was based psychologically on the fact that a servant can merge almost unnoticed into the background.

Once inside the theatre, Dr. Sen must have hidden himself, probably behind a heavy curtain, until the second interval. Then, while an accomplice in the gallery kept Aziz from going down into the stalls by paying for a box of chocolates with a 100-rupee note, knowing full well that he would have to get change from the Green Room barman, Dr. Sen went straight to the passage behind the stalls and to the royal box, ostensibly taking cigars to a V.I.P.

It appeared so incredibly simple I began to doubt whether I could possibly be right. From the assassin's point of view there were many risks. On the other hand the plan was bold and imaginative, and it would have appealed to the terrorists, who were prepared to stake a great deal for such a damaging blow to British prestige. . . .

As I glanced up at the cigar box on the luggage rack, my spine froze.

It was not improbable that Dr. Sen had eventually graduated to a world-wide organization of undercover men.

As we got out of the bus at London Airport I noticed the press guarding the escalator ascending to the main hall. Lord Millarne's car was due any minute.

I caught the eye of a man in B.E.A. uniform, whom I knew to be Saunders of Scotland Yard. I gave him our prearranged signal indicating that I was on to something hot. A pretty B.E.A. receptionist with a pencil and a passenger list led us up the escalator and round to the Customs counters.

I saw the man like Aziz fling open a blue suitcase.

"I have nothing to declare." He had a thick, slightly hoarse voice, with an accent partly French, partly Arabic; nineteen years ago he was a *babu* with a chip on his shoulder and he would have sounded like one. "Only this," he added, holding up the cigar box. "A present from a friend in London."

The Customs officer chalked the lid of the case. "You can take that out, sir."

As a porter took the suitcase away, I saw the man like Aziz open his brief-case and slip the cigar box inside. Then he turned and started walking towards the passengers' lounge.

Saunders caught my eye, querying why I had alerted him. But I had first to make absolutely sure. I had to work out how anybody could plant a bomb in an aircraft he was travelling in, and blow it up without killing himself.

"Are we all going to Rome?" I asked the receptionist.

"No, sir. Some of the passengers are going only as far as Nice, where the aircraft makes a scheduled stop."

That meant the cigar box could be taken out of the brief-case on the flight to Nice and concealed under a seat. Then, if I was right, Dr. Sen, alias Aaron Rivaz, would leave the plane at Nice, having previously timed the bomb to go off on the way to Rome. Lord Millarne and a plane full of people would die in a mysterious air crash.

We caught up with Dr. Sen as he was about to enter the lounge. His indignation was masterly—even Saunders began to look doubtful and apologetic. But the Customs officer did not need a search warrant. "I'm sorry, sir," he said firmly, "but would you mind opening your brief-case?"

Dr. Sen looked at me, his face a caricature of hate and frustration. "Very well, very well." He was the *babu* again, tremulous and high-pitched. "Now you will see what the cigar box contains."

He dipped his hand into the case for a moment, then put it down. The Customs officer took out the cigar box.

"He's got away," I shouted, and immediately Saunders was after Dr. Sen, whose exit was blocked at that moment by a flight of passengers entering the Customs hall. In a moment Saunders had him by the arm in a swiftly applied lock.

"It's a bomb," I said. "He may have set it to go off when he put his hand in the case."

The Customs man put down the cigar box and backed away, and there it lay on the counter suddenly pregnant with destruction.

My impulse was to run, and I might have, if something hadn't rooted me to the spot. A small girl, about four years old, walked up to the counter. She put a toy handbag next to the cigar box, and announced with a toss of her head that she had nothing to declare.

A few people laughed, but the receptionist screamed. . . .

I thought of Pascoe as I snatched up the cigar box. I had no idea of where I was going until I saw a door marked "Gentlemen."

I pushed through the swing door. Nobody was there, so I put the box in a wash basin and turned on the tap. I had barely got back round the corner of the wall when the thing went off.

In that confined space it was almost a soundless, thudding sensation, as if somebody had boxed both my ears together. The room was suddenly in darkness, and I thought I was blinded, until I groped out of the swing doors, to light and air, with my ears drumming and my head spinning.

The announcer's voice filled the room: "British European Airways Flight 140 to Rome. The aircraft is now ready to leave. . . ."

I made my way past the groups of staring faces, to the lounge. Passengers for Rome were picking up coats and hand luggage and filing out.

I tagged on behind. I was going to Rome.

THE END

Hornblower and the Spanish slaver

Continued from page 13

was your secretary, Spendlove, who put the idea in my mind, My Lord."

"Spendlove? I can hardly believe it."

"He was too timid to make the suggestion to you, My Lord, and so he came to me with it."

"I'm sure he did no more than set the wheels of your thought turning, Sir Thomas. In any case, since you have assumed the responsibility, the credit must be yours, of course."

"Thank you, My Lord."

"Now about this drogue. How do you suggest we go about it's construction, Sir Thomas?"

"It need be no more than a large sea anchor, My Lord. A bolt of No. 1 canvas, sewn into a funnel, one end larger than the other."

"It would have to be reinforced even so. Not even No. 1 canvas could stand the strain with Estrella going at twelve knots."

"Yes, My Lord, I was sure of that. Bolt-ropes sewn in in plenty. That would be easy enough, of course. And we have a spare bobstay chain on board. That could be sewn round the mouth of the drogue——"

"And could be attached to the Estrella del Sur to take the main strain."

"Yes, My Lord. That was what I thought."

"It would serve to keep the drogue under water out of sight as well."

"Yes, My Lord."

Fell found Hornblower's quickness in grasping the technical points vastly encouraging. His nervousness was now replaced by enthusiasm.

"And where would you propose to attach this drogue, Sir Thomas?"

"I was thinking — Spendlove suggested, My Lord—that it might be passed over one of the lower pintles of the rudder."

"It would be likely to tear the rudder clean away when exerting its full force."

"That would serve our purpose equally well, My Lord."

"Of course. I understand."

Fell walked across the cabin to where the great cabin window stood open wide. "You can't see her from here as we lie now, My Lord," he said. "But you can hear her."

Over the water came very plainly to them, along with the miasma of her stench, the continued wailing of the wretched slaves.

"Sir Thomas," said Hornblower, "I think it would be very desirable if you would put a boat overside to row guard round the ship tonight."

"Row guard, My Lord?" Fell was not very quick in the uptake. In the peacetime navy it was unnecessary to to take elaborate precautions against desertion.

"Oh yes, most certainly. Half these men would be overside swimming for the shore as soon as night falls. Surely you understand that, Sir Thomas? We must restrain their passion to desert from this brutal service. And in any case a guard-boat will prevent the sale of liquor through the gunports."

"Er—yes, I suppose so, My Lord." But Fell clearly had not grasped the implications of the suggestion, and Hornblower had to elaborate.

"Let us set a boat rowing guard now, before nightfall. I can explain to the authorities why it is necessary. Then, when the time comes——"

"We'll have a boat ready in the water." Enlightenment had broken in on Fell at last.

"Attracting no attention," supplemented Hornblower.

"Of course!" Fell's face lit up with animation.

"It would be best if you gave that order soon, Sir Thomas. But meanwhile there's a little time to spare. We must have this drogue in the making before we go ashore."

"Shall I give the orders, My Lord?"

"Spendlove has figures at his fingertips. He can work out the measurements. Would you be kind enough to send for him, Sir Thomas?"

The cabin was soon crowded with people, as the work was put in hand. Spendlove came first; Gerard, Hornblower's flag lieutenant, was sent for, and then Sefton, the first lieutenant. Next came the sail-maker, the armourer, the carpenter and the boatswain.

The sail-maker was an elderly Swede who had been forced into the British Navy twenty years ago in some conscienceless action of the press-gang, and who had remained in the service ever since. His wrinkled face broke into a grin, like a shattered window, as the beauties of the scheme dawned upon him when he was told about it.

Spendlove was busy sketching out with pencil and paper a drawing of the drogue, with Gerard looking over his shoulder.

"Perhaps even I might make a contribution to this scheme," said Hornblower, and everybody turned to look at him; he met Spendlove's eye with a glassy stare that forbade Spendlove to breathe a word to the effect that the whole scheme was his original idea.

"Yes, My Lord?" said Fell.

"A length of spun yarn," said Hornblower, "made fast to the tail of the drogue and led for'ard and the other end secured to the chain. Just a single strand to keep the drogue tail-end forward while Estrella gets under way. Then, when she sets all sail and the strain comes——"

"The yarn will part!" said Spendlove. "You're right, My Lord. Then

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the drogue will take the water——"

"And she'll be ours, let's hope," concluded Hornblower.

"Excellent, My Lord," said Fell.

Was there perhaps a mild condescension, a tiny hint of patronage, in what he said? Hornblower felt that there was, and was momentarily nettled by it. Already Fell was quite convinced that the whole scheme was his own—despite his handsome earlier admission that Spendlove had contributed.

Hornblower allayed his irritation with cynical amusement at the weaknesses of human nature. "In this stimulating atmosphere of ideas," he said modestly, "one can hardly help but be infected."

"Y-yes, My Lord," said Gerard, eyeing him curiously. Gerard was too sharp altogether, and knew him too well. He had caught the echo of mock-modesty in Hornblower's tone, and was on the verge of guessing the truth.

"No need for you to put your oar in, Mr. Gerard," snapped Hornblower. "Do I have to recall you to your duty? Where's my dinner, Mr. Gerard? Do I always have to starve while I'm under your care? What will Lady Barbara say when she hears of it?"

"I beg pardon, My Lord," spluttered Gerard, entirely taken aback. "I'd quite forgotten—you've been so busy, My Lord. . . ."

His embarrassment was intense; he turned this way and that in the crowded cabin as if looking about him for the missing dinner.

"No time now, Mr. Gerard," said Hornblower. Until the need for distracting Gerard's attention had arisen, he had been equally forgetful of the need for dinner. "Let's hope His Excellency will offer us some small collation."

"I really must beg your pardon, My Lord," said Fell, equally embarrassed.

"Oh, no matter, Sir Thomas," said Hornblower, waving the apologies aside testily. "You and I are in the same condition. Let me see that drawing, Mr. Spendlove."

He was continually being led into playing the part of a peppery old gentleman, when he knew himself to be nothing of the sort. He was able to mellow again as they went once more through the details of the construction of the drogue, and he gave his approval.

"I believe, Sir Thomas," he said, "that you have decided to entrust the work to Mr. Sefton during our absence ashore?"

Fell bowed his agreement.

"Mr. Sefton," said Hornblower, "I am sure I can trust you to have this work completed by the time of our return, early in the middle watch, I fancy?"

"Yes, My Lord."

So there it was, all settled, except for the dreary interval of waiting. This was just like wartime, standing by with a crisis looming in the near future.

"Dinner, My Lord?" suggested Gerard eagerly.

Hornblower wanted no dinner. He was weary now that all was settled and the tension easing.

"I'll call for Giles if I want some," he said, looking round the crowded cabin. He wanted to dismiss this horde of people, and sought words to do so politely.

"Then I'll attend to my other duties, My Lord," said Fell, suddenly and surprisingly tactful.

"Very well, Sir Thomas. Thank you."

The cabin emptied itself rapidly; Hornblower was able by a mere look to put an end to Gerard's tendency to linger. Then he could sink back into his chair and relax.

The ship was full of the sound of the business of watering; sheaves squealing in blocks, pumps clanking, hoarse orders. The noise was sufficiently distracting to prevent his thoughts maintaining any regular course.

He was in half a doze when a knock on the door preceded the arrival of a midshipman.

"Cap'n's respects, My Lord, and the shore boat is approaching."

"My compliments to the captain, and I'll be on deck at once."

The shore boat was bright with a lantern hanging over the sternsheets in the midst of the darkness of the harbour. It lit up the resplendent uniform of Mendez-Castillo, the Spanish Captain-General's aide. Down the side the British officers went, midshipman, lieutenants, captain, admiral, in the reversed order of naval precedence, and powerful strokes of the oars carried them over the black water to the city.

They passed close by the Estrella; there was a light hanging in her rigging, but apparently she had completed her watering, for there was no activity about her. Nevertheless there came a continuous faint wailing up from her open hatchways.

It occurred to Hornblower that these unfortunate slaves, snatched from their homes, packed into a ship whose like they had never seen before, guarded by white men—and white faces must be as extraordinary to them as emerald green ones would be to a European—could have no idea at all of what lay in store for them, any more than he himself would have if he were to be abducted to another planet.

WORDS—1

It is much harder to turn word into deed than deed into word.

Maxim Gorki

"His Excellency," said Mendez-Castillo beside him, "has had pleasure in deciding to receive Your Excellency with full ceremonial."

"That is most kind of His Excellency," replied Hornblower in Spanish, recalling himself to his present duties with an effort.

The tiller was put over and the boat turned abruptly round a corner, revealing a brightly lit jetty with a massive gateway beyond. The boat ran alongside and half a dozen uniformed figures stood to attention as the party climbed on shore.

"This way, Your Excellency," murmured Mendez-Castillo.

They passed through the gateway into a courtyard lit by scores of lanterns, which shone on ranks of soldiers drawn up in two treble lines. As Hornblower emerged into the courtyard, a shouted order brought the muskets to the "present," and at the same moment a band burst into music. Hornblower's tone-deaf ear heard the jerky braying, and he halted at attention with his hand to the brim of his cocked hat, his fellow officers beside him, until the deafening noise came to an end.

"A fine military appearance, Major," said Hornblower, looking down the rigid lines of white cross-belts.

"Your Excellency is too kind. Would Your Excellency please proceed to the door in front?"

An imposing flight of steps, lined on either side with more uniforms; beyond that an open doorway and a vast room. A prolonged whispered conference between Mendez-Castillo and an official beside the door, and then their names blared out in resounding Spanish—Hornblower had long given up hope of ever hearing his name pronounced intelligibly by a foreign tongue.

The central figure in the room rose from his chair—which was almost a throne—to receive the British Commander-in-Chief standing. He was a much younger man than Hornblower had expected, in his thirties, dark-complexioned, with a thin, mobile face and a humorous expression at odds with his arrogant hooked nose. His uniform gleamed with gold lace.

Mendez-Castillo made the presentations; the Englishmen bowed deeply to the representative of His Most Catholic Majesty and each received a polite inclination in return. Mendez-Castillo ventured so far as to murmur their host's titles—probably a breach of etiquette, thought Hornblower, for it should be assumed that visitors were fully aware of them.

"His Excellency the Marques de Ayora, Captain-General of His Most Catholic Majesty's dominion of Puerto Rico."

Ayora smiled in welcome.

"I know you speak Spanish, Your Excellency," he said. "I have already had the pleasure of hearing you do so."

"Indeed, Your Excellency?"

"I was a major of *migueletes* under Claros at the time of the attack on Rosas. I had the honour of serving beside Your Excellency—I remember Your Excellency well. Your Excellency would naturally not remember me."

It would have been too flagrant to pretend he did, and Hornblower was for once at a loss for a word, and could only bow again.

"Your Excellency," went on Ayora, "has changed very little since that day, if I may venture to say so. It is eleven years ago."

"Your Excellency is too kind." That was one of the most useful phrases in polite language.

Ayora had a word for Fell—a compliment on the appearance of his ship—and a supplementary smile for the junior officers. Then, as if it were a moment for which he had been waiting, Mendez-Castillo turned to them.

"Perhaps you gentlemen would care to be presented to the ladies of the company?" he said; his glance passed over Hornblower and Fell and took in only the lieutenants and the midshipman. Hornblower translated, and saw them depart a little nervously under Mendez-Castillo's escort.

Ayora, etiquette and Spanish training notwithstanding, wasted no time in coming to the point the moment he was alone with Hornblower and Fell.

"I watched your pursuit of the Estrella del Sur today through my telescope," he said, and Hornblower once more found himself at a loss for a word; a bow and a smile also seemed out of place in this connection. He could only look blank.

"It is an anomalous situation," said Ayora. "Under the preliminary convention between our governments, the British Navy has the right to capture on the high seas Spanish ships laden with slaves. But, once within Spanish territorial waters, those ships are safe. When the new convention for the suppression of the slave trade is signed, then those ships will be forfeit to His Most Catholic Majesty's government; but, until that time, it is my duty to give them every protection."

"Your Excellency is perfectly correct, of course," said Hornblower.

"And I fully intend to carry out my duty," said Ayora, firmly.

"Naturally," said Hornblower.

"So perhaps it would be best to come to a clear understanding regarding future events."

"There is nothing I would like better, Your Excellency."

"It is clearly understood, then, that I will tolerate no interference with the Estrella del Sur while she is in waters under my jurisdiction?"

"Of course I understand that, Your Excellency," said Hornblower.

"The Estrella wishes to sail at the first light of morning tomorrow."

"That is what I expected, Your Excellency."

"And, for the sake of the amity between our governments, it would be best if your ship were to remain in this harbour until after she sails."

Ayora's eyes met Hornblower's in a steady stare. His face was perfectly expressionless; there was no hint of a threat in that glance. But a threat was implied—the ultimate hint of superior strength was there. At Ayora's command a hundred thirty-two pounders could sweep the waters of the harbour.

Hornblower was reminded of the Roman who agreed with his emperor because it was ill arguing with the master of thirty legions. He adopted the same pose as far as his acting ability allowed. He smiled the smile of a good loser.

"We have had our chance and lost it, Your Excellency," he said. "We can hardly complain."

If Ayora felt any relief at his acquiescence it showed no more plainly than his previous hint of force.

"Your Excellency is most understanding," he said.

"Naturally we are desirous of taking advantage of the land breeze to leave tomorrow morning," said Hornblower, deferentially. "Now that we have refilled with water—for the opportunity of doing so—I have to thank Your Excellency—we would not like to trespass too far upon Your Excellency's hospitality."

Hornblower did his best to maintain

"Well, this doesn't reflect very much credit on your teaching"

CHALLENGE THE FAMOUS

KENNETH MORE

answered these questions on FLYING—he played Douglas Bader in the film *Reach For The Sky*. Try pitting your wits against his to beat his score

(Answers on page 26)

1	When does an aircraft reach the "sound barrier"?	When its speed is that of sound—about 1,144 feet per second.
2	What does George do in an aircraft?	Flies it. George is the name given to the automatic pilot.
3	What lights must an aircraft show at night?	A white tail light. A red on the left wing tip; green on the right.
4	When did the air speed record reach 100, 300, 600, 800 and 1,000 miles per hour?	100: 1912, I think by an American; 300: 1926 or 1927, by a British plane; 600: I think in 1951, an R.A.F. pilot; 800: 1952, in the U.S.A.; 1,000: 1956, Peter Twiss of Britain.
5	If you fly west fast enough you can arrive at an earlier hour than you left. Why can't you go on round the world and get back before you started?	I suppose it has something to do with the earth moving round the sun. Somewhere on your way round the world, time must start being counted in the opposite direction. Obviously, you can't arrive back a day earlier.
6	Which is the world's largest international airport?	London Airport.

—an appearance of innocence under Ayora's searching stare.

"Perhaps we might hear what Captain Gomez has to say," said Ayora, turning aside to summon somebody close at hand. He was a young man, strikingly handsome, dressed in plain but elegant blue clothes, with a silver-hilted sword at his side.

"May I present," said Ayora, "Don Miguel Gomez y Gonzalez, whose ship you pursued today."

Bows were exchanged.

"May I felicitate you on the sailing qualities of your ship, Captain?" said Hornblower.

"Many thanks, *señor*."

"Clorinda is a fast frigate, but your ship is superior at all points of sailing." Hornblower was not too sure about how to render that technical expression into Spanish, but apparently he contrived to make himself understood.

"Many thanks again, *señor*."

"And I could even venture"—Hornblower spread his hands deprecatingly—"to congratulate her captain on the brilliance with which he managed her."

Captain Gomez bowed, and Hornblower suddenly checked himself. These highflown Spanish compliments were all very well, but they could be overdone. He did not want to give the impression of a man too anxious to please. But he was reassured by a glance at the expression on Gomez's face. He was actually simpering; that was the only word for it.

Hornblower mentally classified him as a young man of great ability and well pleased with himself. Another compliment would not be one too many.

"I shall suggest to my government," he went on, "that they request permission to take off the lines of the Star of the South, and study the plan of her sails, in order to build a similar vessel. She would be ideal for the work of the navy in these waters. But of course it would be hard to find a suitable captain."

Gomez bowed once more. It was hard not to be self-satisfied when complimented by a seaman with the legendary reputation of Hornblower.

"His Excellency," put in Ayora, "is desirous of leaving the harbour tomorrow morning."

"You can understand, Captain," Hornblower said quickly, "that I would be glad to leave on the same tide and with the same land breeze that takes you out. After our experiences today, I fear you need be under no apprehension."

"None at all," said Gomez.

There was something of condescension in his smile. That agreement was all that Hornblower wanted. He was at pains to conceal his relief.

"It will be my duty to pursue you if you are still in sight when I leave," he said, apologetically.

By his glance he made it clear that the remark was adressed to the Captain-General as well as to Gomez, but it was Gomez who answered.

"I have no fear," he said.

"In that case, Your Excellency," said Hornblower, clinching the matter, "I can inform Your Excellency officially that His Majesty's ship in which my flag is being flown will leave harbour tomorrow morning as early as suits Captain Gomez's convenience."

"That is understood," agreed Ayora. "I regret greatly that Your Excellency's visit should be so brief."

"In the life of a sailor," said Hornblower, "duty seems invariably to interfere with inclination. But at least during this brief visit I have had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of Your Excellency, and of Captain Gomez."

"There are numerous other gentlemen here also desirous of making Your Excellency's acquaintance," said Ayora. "May I be permitted to present them to Your Excellency?"

The real business of the evening had been transacted, and now it was only necessary to go through the other formalities. The rest of the reception was as dreary as Hornblower had expected and feared; the Puerto Rican magnates who were led up in turn to meet him were as dull.

At midnight Hornblower caught the eye of Gerard and gathered his flock together. Ayora noted the gesture and gave, in courteous terms, the leave to depart which, as His Catholic Majesty's representative, he had to give unless his guests were to be guilty of discourtesy.

"Your Excellency has doubtless need to rest in readiness for your early start tomorrow," he said. "I will not attempt to detain Your Excellency in consequence, much as Your Excellency's presence here has been appreciated."

The goodbyes were said, and Mendez-Castillo undertook to escort the party back to the Clorinda. It was something of a shock to Hornblower to find that the band and the guard of honour were still in the courtyard to offer the official compliments on his departure. He stood at the salute while the band played some jerky tune or other; then they went down into the waiting boat.

The harbour was pitch dark as they rowed out into it, the few lights visible doing almost nothing to alleviate the blackness. They rounded the corner and passed astern of the Estrella again.

Farther along, a quiet challenge came over the inky water, issuing from a nucleus of darkness even more solid than the darkness surrounding it.

"Flag," answered the midshipman. "Clorinda."

"You see, Major," said Hornblower, "that Captain Fell deemed it necessary to row guard round the ship during the night."

"I understood that to be the case, Your Excellency," answered Mendez-Castillo.

"Our seamen will go to great lengths to indulge themselves in the pleasures of the shore."

"Naturally, Your Excellency," said Mendez-Castillo.

The boat ran alongside the Clorinda; standing awkwardly in the sternsheets Hornblower said his last goodbyes, and uttered his last word of thanks to the representative of his host before going up the side. From the entry port he watched the boat shove off again and disappear into the darkness.

"Now," he said, "we can make better use of our time."

On the main deck, just visible in the light from the lantern hanging from the mainstay, was a Thing—that was the only way to describe it—something of canvas and cordage, with a length of chain attached to it. Sefton was standing beside it.

"I see you've finished it, Mr. Sefton."

"Yes, My Lord. A full hour ago. The sail-maker and his mates worked admirably."

Hornblower turned to Fell.

"I fancy, Sir Thomas," he said, "that you have in mind the necessary orders to give. Perhaps you would be kind enough to tell me about them before you issue them?"

"Aye, aye, My Lord."

That eternal navy answer was the only one Fell could make in the circumstances, for Fell had not yet given full thought to the next problems. Down in the cabin, alone with his admiral, Fell's unreadiness was a little more apparent.

"I suppose," prompted Hornblower, "that you will tell off the necessary personnel for the expedition. Which officer can you trust fully to exercise discretion?"

WORDS—2

Men who have much to say use the fewest words.

H. W. Shaw

Little by little the details were settled. Powerful swimmers who could work under water; an armourer's mate who could be relied upon to put the final shackle in the chain in the darkness; the boat's crew was decided upon, summoned, and instructed in all the details of the plan.

When the guard-boat came in for the relief of its crew, there was another crew standing by all ready, which went down overside rapidly and quietly, although encumbered with the Thing and the necessary gear.

The guard-boat pushed off again into the darkness, and Hornblower stood on the quarterdeck to watch it go. There might be an international incident arising out of this, or he might be made to appear a fool in the eyes of the world, which would be just as bad.

He strained his ears for any sounds which would tell him how the work was progressing, but he could hear nothing.

The land breeze had just begun to blow, gently, but strongly enough to swing Clorinda to her anchor; it would carry any sounds away from him, he realized—but it would also serve to obscure any suspicious noises if anybody in the Estrella was awake enough to hear them. She had a full counter, with, as was only to be expected, plenty of rake. A swimmer who reached her stern unobserved would be able to work at her rudder unobserved.

"My Lord," said Gerard's voice quietly beside him. "Would not this be a suitable time to rest?"

"You are quite right, Mr. Gerard. A most suitable time," answered Hornblower, continuing to lean against the rail.

"Well, then, My Lord?"

"I have agreed with you, Mr. Gerard. Surely you can be content with that?"

But Gerard's voice went on, remorseless as the voice of conscience. "There is cold beef laid out in the cabin, My Lord. Fresh bread and a bottle of Bordeaux."

That was a different story. Hornblower suddenly realized how hungry he was; during the past thirty hours he had eaten one meagre meal, because the cold collation he had expected at the reception had failed to materialize.

"You would have made an excellent wet nurse, Mr. Gerard," he said, "if nature had treated you more generously. But I suppose my life will be unbearable until I yield to your importunity."

On the way to the companion, they passed Fell; he was striding up and down the quarterdeck in the darkness, and they could hear his hard breathing. It pleased Hornblower to know that even these muscular heroes could feel anxiety. It might be polite, even kind, to invite Fell to join them at this cold supper, but Hornblower dismissed the idea. He had had as much of Fell's company already as he could bear.

DOWN below, Spendlove was waiting in the lighted cabin.

"The vultures are gathered together," said Hornblower. It was amusing to see that Spendlove was pale and tense, too. "I hope you gentlemen will join me."

The younger men were silent as they ate. Hornblower sipped his wine.

"Six months in the tropics have done this Bordeaux no good," he commented.

It was inevitable that as host, and admiral, and older man, his opinion should be received with deference. Spendlove broke the next silence.

"That length of spun yarn, My Lord," he said. "The breaking strain. . . ."

"Mr. Spendlove," said Hornblower. "All the discussion in the world won't change it now. We shall know in good time. Meanwhile, let's not spoil our dinner with technical discussions."

"Your pardon, My Lord," said Spendlove, abashed.

Was it by mere coincidence or through telepathy that Hornblower had been thinking at that very moment about the breaking strain of that length of spun yarn in the drogue? But he would not dream of admitting that he had been thinking about it.

The dinner continued.

"Well," said Hornblower, raising his glass, "we can admit the existence of mundane affairs long enough to allow of a toast. Here's to Head Money."

As they drank they heard unmistakable sounds on deck and overside. The guard-boat had returned from its mission. Spendlove and Gerard exchanged glances, and poised themselves ready to stand up. Hornblower forced himself to lean back and shake his head sadly, his glass still in his hand.

"Too bad about this Bordeaux, gentlemen," he said.

Then came the knock on the door and the expected message.

"Cap'n's respects, My Lord, and the boat has returned."

To be continued next week

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Settled out of court

Continued from page 17

all. A young, a very young, barrister on circuit, my conduct in assisting at this battle was, I suppose, very close to being unprofessional. But I was interested, and involved. . . .

It all began in a simple case of contract in the county court at Hamton. I was briefed to appear for one Albert Hand, a small farmer and the tenant of the village store at Tiddings Magna. A Mr. Mitt, the owner of the store and a person of some substance, was suing for a declaration that the weekly rent of the store was £2. My client claimed that the proper rent was five shillings.

I say it was a simple case because there was no written evidence on either side, no witnesses to any original bargain. It was just a question of which man the jury would believe.

Counsel for Mr. Mitt—a dark and attractive lady barrister—opened her case. The store had been let to Mr. Hand some five years before. There had been no lease signed. No letters had passed. It had been a gentleman's agreement. The rent was £2 per week; and this rent had been paid punctually every month until six months previously—January 1 last to be precise—when the defendant had proffered £1 instead of £8 and had asserted that this was the proper amount.

While she was speaking, I listened no more than was necessary to be sure that there was nothing unexpected.

I spent a little time looking around the courtroom to assure myself that people I would need for later cases were at hand. Yes, there was the clerk from Brighouse and Higgs. I would want a word with him about the laundry case. Ah! And the local income tax inspector. He was a witness for me in what promised to be a diverting hour or two.

Mr. Mitt's counsel was closing her remarks. She called Frederick Mitt as a witness, and took him through the story. Mr. Mitt looked a dependable, self-important sort of chap.

Our case was that Mr. Hand had punctually paid at the rate of £2 per week for the period of five years. But the amount so paid—£520 in all—did not represent two hundred and sixty weekly payments of £2 by way of rent. It represented two hundred and sixty payments of five shillings in respect of rent and two hundred and sixty payments of £1 15s., to wit £455.

This larger amount was due to the landlord, Mitt, in respect of one refrigerator, one deep-freeze cabinet, one cash register, and sundry fittings and stock in hand; all of which my client took over when he became tenant, and in respect of which the plaintiff had told him: "Pay for them as you can." This my client had done honestly and punctually; and, now that the debt was discharged, he was entitled to continue the tenancy, paying the proper rent—five shillings per week.

I cross-examined Mr. Mitt on these points and he emphatically denied them all. So I called Mr. Hand.

My client made, I think, an appealing figure in the witness box, so meek, so put-upon he seemed. When I had finished with him, the plaintiff's counsel cross-examined my Mr. Hand.

Mr. Hand had stated that the cost of the stock and fittings which he took over with the business was £455?

It was, Hand said.

How did the witness remember that figure?

Mr. Hand just did remember that figure. He didn't know how.

Would it surprise the witness to be told that the correct amount was £437 10s.? And that it was still owing?

It would, said Mr. Hand with some heat. And it wasn't.

"If the amount did happen to be £437 10s., just for argument's sake, eh?" said counsel with ghastly friendliness. "And if you had been paying it off in the manner you suggest—only supposing, mind you—it would mean, wouldn't it, that you had overpaid to the extent of £17 10s.? I mean, if your story about the rent being five shillings per week were true."

Albert looked puzzled and tearful. It worked. The judge intervened. "Miss Canister, I think it would be more helpful if you put very simple questions, one at a time, to the witness."

Miss Canister inclined her head; then, holding the edge of her gown delicately in one hand, she leaned forward threateningly.

Did the witness deny, she asked, that the correct amount of the debt was £437 10s.?

Mr. Hand shook his head.

Miss Canister implored the witness not to shake his head at her, but simply to answer "Yes" or "No."

Mr. Hand said: "Yes."

It was a pity, wasn't it, that the bigger amount should be the right one? Miss Canister suggested; because if only the smaller amount had been owing and if, as the witness had told the court, he had repaid the larger amount, then there would have been £17 10s. due to be paid back to the witness.

I saw Albert Hand moisten his lips and nod, fascinated.

Miss Canister asked if it were possible that the witness had been mistaken about the amount of the debt.

Albert in a hopeful tone said that Yes, he might have been.

I groaned in spirit.

It might have been £437 10s. after all? prompted Miss Canister.

Albert said it might well have been.

Miss Canister wished to remind Albert that he was on oath. It was very important to get this amount correct. Now, would the witness be prepared to state that the amount of the debt was £437 10s.; or was it more?

Albert reckoned it was £437 10s.; and looked shyly at the clerk of the court as if he expected to be handed £17 10s. there and then.

I flopped back in my chair and tried to seem unconcerned. There was nothing else that I could do. The judge, evidently as shaken as I was by my client's pliability, leaned forward.

"The court needs to be quite clear on this point," he said mildly. "And I want to be sure that the witness understands fully what he has said." He addressed Albert directly. "Am I to understand that, whereas at first in your evidence you stated that the amount of the debt was £455, now, since then, owing to an effort of memory or to some other cause, you state that the amount was £437 10s.?"

Albert nodded happily.

"Four hundred and thirty-seven pounds ten shillings?"

"Yes, sir," said the perfidious Albert.

The judge sat back, looking tired. He could not well have done more. I could hardly bear to look at Miss Canister. The expression of satisfaction on her face was sickening.

"Have you any more questions you wish to put to this witness?" asked the judge.

I shut my eyes. Why go on with it?

There was a moment's silence. I looked up just in time to see Miss Canister endeavouring to free herself from what appeared to be the embraces of her client, Mr. Mitt.

"What is it? What is it?" I heard her whisper angrily.

Mr. Mitt was grappling with his counsel, trying to pull her down. His portentous face was clearly ravaged by emotion. Miss Canister subsided into her chair. In low tones Mr. Mitt began a feverish conversation with her.

Albert Hand gave the judge a sad, appealing little smile.

As Mr. Mitt conversed with his counsel, I saw Miss Canister portray upon her lovely features the emotions of indignant rejection, speechless astonishment, derisive incredulity, angry refusal, pained acceptance, rage, shame—and squalid gloom.

Then, after the judge had been tapping on his desk with his gold pencil for a while—never a good sign with him—Miss Canister rose limply to her feet.

"I have to submit, your honour, having just received fresh instructions from my client—an infirmity of memory from which I now gather my client suffers—he has utterly misremembered the whole matter. In short, your honour, my client desires me to state that the rent in dispute is in fact, five shillings per week, and always has been so. He desires me to withdraw his suit; and, of course, your honour, to express his profound regret for the distress and inconvenience which he has caused."

The judge reddened slightly. Then he looked at me with an indulgent eye.

I must confess I was feeling almost wild with relief. After such a set-back, who would have believed that the plaintiff would throw up the case in this providential manner? Perhaps after all my point about the debt had got home somehow. Well, now I would rub it in a bit about costs. I got up, exulting.

As I did so, I felt an urgent plucking at my sleeve. I shook off the restraining hand. "Your honour," I said. But I got no farther. Albert Hand pulled me down on to my chair by main force.

"Let go, you idiot," I said. "Let me finish it off."

"Just a minute," whispered Albert shrilly. "It's no go. Look—the rent's two pounds a week. There's been a mistake. It's two pounds a week, I tell you, always has been. You tell him."

I looked at Mr. Hand in complete astonishment. The emotions which I had so lately seen passing in panorama across the face of Miss Canister, now flitted in the same order across mine.

I found myself on my feet again, crimson with confusion and chagrin. "Your honour, I am now instructed by my client . . . lapse of memory . . . profound regret. . . ." I had to go through it all.

The judge didn't say much; but all of it hurt. Each side to bear its own costs, of course. I bade Mr. Hand farewell with less than my usual professional warmth.

When the court was adjourned for that day, I was still sore about this case. It was a clear, mild evening. I thought I would run down to the village of Tiddings Magna and perhaps have a quiet chat with my recent client.

I jumped into the train just as it was pulling out. There in the compartment was Mr. Mitt, alone.

"'Evening to you, sir," said Mitt. He showed no sign of rancour. Indeed, why should he?

"Rum do, wasn't it?" he asked, after an uneasy pause.

"It certainly was," I agreed.

"Puzzling, eh?"

"Quite puzzling," I told him, tartly.

"Ah!" He sat for a while, slumped on his seat, hands clasped across his stomach.

"Will there be an inquiry about it, do you think?" he asked at last, with a quick glance at me.

There was no harm in keeping him in suspense, I thought. "Well, there could be," I said, looking grave.

"Ah!" Mr. Mitt's moustache began to stir. Then he leaned across towards me, all candour. "Well, there's no harm in telling a gentleman like yourself. It was like this, you see, sir. It was when I saw the tax inspector."

"Yes?" I prompted. "The tax inspector was in court. But what has he got to do with it?"

"Well, it was seeing him that brought it all back to me. Very bad memory, I've got. Shocking memory. But, seeing him, it suddenly brought it to mind. I could remember making out my income tax return, d'you see? Of course, back it came in a flash. Five shillings a week it was. I could see it on that form as plain as I see you, sir."

"Do you mean that you had made a false income tax return, saying you were getting five shillings when you were getting two pounds?" I asked him.

"Bless you no, sir," Mr. Mitt told me, with a fatherly pat. "The return was right, of course. It was me who was all mistaken in court, d'you see?"

"I see," I said sceptically. "But then why should Mr. Hand—? Heavens! You don't mean to suggest that Mr. Hand was evading income tax, too, by putting down his rent as two pounds when it was five shillings?"

"Not a doubt of it," said Mr. Mitt.

All this I digested, and it took a little while. "And what is the rent to be in future?" I asked with a wild laugh.

"Ha! Ha!" (This laugh was a martial one.) "Albert wants to fight me for it. Him! Fight me! Ha! Ha!"

"Well then," I said, "may the best man win." THE END

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The lively story of the

HOME GUARD

They drilled with wooden rifles, and stood ready to fight the German invaders—with shotguns, pikes and axes. This revealing series of articles on the men who might have been heroes . . .

BEGINS IN JOHN BULL NEXT WEEK

CHALLENGE THE FAMOUS

In his answers to the six questions on page 25, Kenneth More scored three and a quarter points. He was nearly right over Question 1, but the speed of sound varies with temperature and therefore with altitude. At sea level it might vary between 1,087 and 1,175 feet per second on cold and hot days.

More was right over Question 2 and had a good try at Question 3—an aircraft must carry a white light in front; red and white astern; a red to port (left) and a green to starboard.

He had a gallant try at Question 4. The dates were: 100 m.p.h.: 1912, Vedrines (France); 300 m.p.h.: 1928, di Bernardi (Italy); 600 m.p.h.: 1945, Wilson (Britain); 800 m.p.h.: 1955, Hanes (U.S.A.); 1,000 m.p.h.: 1956, Twiss (Britain).

Question 5 baffled More. A flyer who goes right round the world will cross the international date line which runs between Alaska and Siberia and down across the Pacific. More was right over Question 6.

The man on the rim of death

Continued from page 10

of anything but her husband, she told nine-year-old Michael to get tea for the younger children. He solved the problem with fish and chips.

When Eggleston arrived at Sabden reporters were queueing for the telephone. He asked the police to relay a message. Mrs. Jackson received it in the same formula as before: "As far as we know. . . ." Feeling sick, sweating, still with her coat on, Mrs. Jackson walked up and down—waiting.

At 7.10, Freear fixed the seventh and last ladder in position. "Won't be long now," said one of the firemen. Kelly said nothing. He knew that Freear was married and had two boys. He knew the chimney could be as dangerous for Freear as it was for Jackson.

Standing on his top ladder, Freear decided to put a plank across the open mouth of the chimney from a gap in the coping stones to a similar gap on the other side. Then Jackson could roll off the coping stones and drop about eighteen inches on to the plank.

Jackson was ready to try anything. Freear sent down for a plank. There was none on the site.

While Police-constable Swarbrick, the village policeman, and another man went to fetch planks, Freear and Wright sang popular songs to Jackson to keep his spirits up. Their effort was wasted on him. "I felt no more like listening to songs than I felt like singing myself."

By now Betty Jackson had left her children and run to the police station. She paused outside, but afraid of what she might learn, did not go in. *I'll go home and put Geoffrey to bed, then come back,* she told herself. She hurried home.

While Mrs. Jackson was putting four-year-old Geoffrey to bed, her husband was rehearsing in his mind what he would have to do when the plank arrived. Although rescue seemed close, he reminded himself that the situation had not yet changed. A mistake now, a false movement, and he would plunge to his death as surely as if he had fallen in the first moment.

A shout from below warned them that the plank was coming up. When it came within reach Freear saw that it was more like a tree-trunk than a plank.

"I couldn't muscle it," he says. "Even if I could have heaved it across the chimney, the chances are I would have brought the stones down." Instead he balanced it out of the way across the arms of his top ladder.

Jackson, though still outwardly perfectly calm, was feeling a growing despair. Every minute seemed an hour to his frozen, aching muscles. He called to Freear to lash one end of a strong rope to the top of the ladder, and throw the other end to him.

Deaf, Freear did not understand him at once, and when he did he was doubtful. Using the rope, Jackson meant to drag himself off the coping stones. If they fell as he moved, the whole of Jackson's fifteen stone would come suddenly on to Freear's ladder.

Would the fixings in the rotten chimney stand the jerk? If they did hold fast, would Jackson's frozen fingers retain their grip on the rope? Jackson could not possibly hold out much longer. The risk would have to be taken.

The rope fell within a few inches of Jackson's right hand; the hand which for four hours had grasped the top of his own ladder, pulling it into the chimney, helping to hold the loose stones in place. Jackson hesitated. To take the rope he had to let go of the ladder. It might be the one thing holding the stones.

With difficulty he unclamped his aching fingers. He took hold of the rope. Nothing happened. Slowly moving his wrist in a small circle, he wound the rope several times round it. Then, a few inches at a time, he began to drag himself off the stones.

Down below the crowd sensed that rescue was near, but it was impossible to see clearly what was happening on the chimney top. Tense, silent, the villagers, policemen and firemen strained their eyes upwards.

Suddenly, a horrified gasp came from the crowd. "He's fallen," a woman screamed.

In a cloud of dust and rubble the top of the chimney had broken away. Half a ton of huge stones plunged down through the glare of the lights, shattering the ruins of an old boiler house next to the chimney.

When the dust cleared, Jackson was seen sitting on the stones at the top of Freear's ladder. Beside him the coping stones he had balanced for four hours had disappeared, carrying away with them the top of his own ladder.

Jackson remained where he was, working his cramped muscles to get the circulation back. Then stiffly, like an old man, he too climbed down, followed by Wright.

"When Jackson reached the ground there was a spontaneous cheer from the crowd," says Inspector Bowden. "The shock of the falling stones had made clear to everyone the danger he had been in."

In the ambulance, Jackson was wrapped in blankets and given a hot drink. Freear, who had turned away to collect his jacket, found when he went back to speak to Jackson that he could not get near him because of reporters. He did not see him again until the following Saturday night, when they had a celebration together with their wives.

At 7.45 Mrs. Jackson went to Great Harwood police station. This time she was told that her husband was safely down.

At 8 p.m., the ambulance arrived at the Victoria Hospital, Accrington. A doctor looked at Jackson's eyes, and his tongue, and told him he could go home.

At Sabden, Horace Freear went back up the chimney and carefully took his equipment down. The villagers went back to their homes. The turntable ladder was lowered. The emergency tender switched off the lights. At 8.45 Freear and the fire brigade left the scene.

Next morning Jackson went back up the chimney. His ribs were sore and he could not use his right hand properly, but he refixed his ladder and cleared off all the loose stones from the chimney top.

A week later nothing remained of the chimney but a mound of rubble and blocks of stone in the field. "Normally I charge about a pound a foot for taking down a chimney piecemeal," says Jackson. "There was extra on this one because I knew it was dangerous. Just the same, I sometimes feel I undercharged for the job."

THE END

Come to sunny Sahara . . .

Continued from page 18

postage cost £2. They included a forty-page itinerary describing every step of the journey—right down to the numbers on the caps of the porters in Swiss stations.

"They told us afterwards that they had not missed a single sight. I think we have them as clients for life," says Miss Winsor.

The partners emphasize the personal touch in their dealings with clients. When they learned recently that one client would celebrate his fiftieth birthday during a two-day stop in Honolulu, they cabled instructions that when the plane landed he should be met by a Hawaiian dancer bearing garlands of flowers.

They have been asked to find a supply of fresh milk for a young baby travelling to Barbados, to have special towels put in the hotel rooms of a client travelling six thousand miles, and to send a birthday cake with nine candles to a schoolboy whose parents were holidaying in Portugal.

An American who had left for the Continent telephoned to say that on second thoughts she could not resist buying a small silver coronation coach that she had seen in a Mayfair antique shop.

All she remembered was that the shop was next door to a hairdresser's. Ena Molesworth took the afternoon off, walked through fourteen streets before she found the article, and sent it off by airmail.

Miss Winsor has at least one complaint about one of their clients. A woman who was booking a single trip to the French Riviera paid a heavy insurance premium on a not-too-new fur coat by cheque. The following day the cheque was returned marked "no funds."

"We got on to the insurance company right away and told them," says Miss Winsor. "They were very glad to know because they had just had a telegram from the lady claiming for the loss of the coat in transit."

Miss Molesworth and Miss Winsor were working for the Foreign Office when, in 1945, Miss Winsor resigned and, with £300 of savings, started the business in a small backroom in London's Haymarket. During the war she had shepherded V.I.P.s to and from America and the neutral countries; among them was Leslie Howard, whom she sent on the last, ill-fated journey of an airliner.

"If *you'd* wanted a fur coat I'd be the first to tell you to go out and get one"

Within a few months Miss Molesworth joined her. She says: "The first thing I asked was, 'Where do I sit?' We had one chair and one desk. We stuck the stamps on the envelopes ourselves and every time we had a client, which was not very often, one of us had to rush out to get the required papers."

One of their first clients was Somerset Maugham, for whose secretary Miss Winsor managed to obtain a hard-to-get passage to the United States. "We were munching our sandwiches one lunchtime when there was a knock on the door and Mr. Maugham came in. He told us that he was impressed by our enthusiasm, would give us his travel business and try to bring his friends in.

"He kept his word because we have never looked back since," says Miss Winsor. Now they have four floors of office space, employ twenty-five people and make several hundred bookings a week.

Marguerite Winsor and Ena Molesworth make at least eight trips abroad every year. Two years ago they spent seven weeks on a world tour, via Canada, the United States, Hawaii, Hongkong, Malaya, Ceylon, India, East Africa and the Mediterranean. In each stopping place they visited hotels of every class, appointed agents, looked over tourist attractions and made notes.

They collected street plans, maps and picture postcards, of which they have hundreds. Says Miss Winsor: "The humble postcard helps a lot because people won't believe your descriptions. They have to see."

Every spring and autumn the partners visit the up-and-coming resorts of Europe to make holiday plans for their clients.

"Spain," says Miss Winsor, "became popular three or four years ago because film actors on location and discriminating socialites found places like Majorca and the Costa Brava unspoilt, cheap and beautiful.

"Like all agents we always try to send our favoured clients to the places which will be famous tomorrow." Among the locations which she thinks will be the holiday resorts of tomorrow are the Balearic island of Ibiza, Sicily, and the Costa Blanca near Valencia in Spain.

"Now that you can go around the world for six hundred pounds in comfort, travel habits are changing and almost anyone can go anywhere," she says. "We are currently booking a holiday in the Canary Islands for a group of ten London fairground people."

She finds that, apart from the very rich, the travellers who spend the most money are business and professional men. Sixty-two doctors recently paid more than £70,000 for a trip to various Continental congresses.

Attending a travel agents' conference in London two years ago, Miss Winsor thought, as a joke, of having the guests greeted by a girl, in space-travel clothes complete with glass-fronted helmet, distributing bookings to the moon for the year 2055.

She developed the idea and it was mentioned all over the world in newspapers after a friend had painted a mural in her waiting-room showing space ships taking off and booking offices for the moon and the planets.

Since then Miss Winsor has received requests for space travel from a Milan tram driver, a Rhodesian planter and a Riviera croupier, among others.

"Many of them enclose a booking fee with their letter. We return that, but in all seriousness we take note of their wishes and reply to them, After all, who knows what may happen tomorrow?"

The partners often laugh at their mistakes. Once, two years ago, they sent the wrong two wives to the wrong two husbands. The husbands, brothers, with very similar initials, were spending a week together at a Continental golf resort and then separating to meet their wives at different places. A clerical mistake sent one woman to join the other's husband and vice versa.

The two women realized the mistake when they met as they were coming off the boat train at Calais and exchanged papers.

"That might well have had some serious consequences," recalls Miss Winsor. "Luckily for us they took it all in good part."

THE END

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Nurse is a neighbour

Continued from page 15

father and child," said Mr. Prebble firmly. "It makes you fonder of your children."

"Perhaps, then, you'll keep over in that corner," I requested.

He shuffled backwards, knocked over a basin, rucked up three sheets of newspaper, and leaned apprehensively against the wall.

Then he said: "I'll get the hot water for you," and made a lunge for the door.

The draught he caused by closing it lifted several papers. I caught a tantalizing glimpse of a headline about some enticement case of which I had never heard, and twisted my neck in an effort to read the opening paragraphs. I don't know why, but other people seem to get more interesting Sunday newspapers than I ever do.

Mr. Prebble returned with a huge kettle of boiling water. I set to work, taking a quick glance at the place where he was standing, and trying to estimate where he would fall. I moved the chair a couple of feet towards the wall so that he would not bang his head on it as he came down.

The delivery was an easy one. My only fears were for Mr. Prebble, who was ominously silent behind me. Once I thought I heard him gasp, but he remained where he was. It was not until I stepped back and said: "Well, there's your new son," that he made a move.

He came very slowly forward, his face absolutely white. But he gave an odd little laugh and said hoarsely: "I'm . . . I'm glad I saw that."

The newspapers had evidently been right. I, too, felt oddly glad that he had seen it. It forged, somehow, another link between myself and the people of the district. I was beginning to belong. The memory of his smile stayed with me as I went out into the night again.

But I did wish I could have read the rest of that story about the enticement case.

When I applied for a job as a district nurse, Blandley interested me at once. It is one of those typical English villages where old-world charm is inseparable from bad drains and damp patches on the bedroom walls; but on a summer's day it can be delightful.

The district nurse's cottage appealed to me as soon as I saw it.

Blandley, I decided, was the place I was looking for—and the county authority signified that I was just the sort of nurse it was looking for.

This was just as well: my mother's memory was not what it had been, and she needed somewhere quiet to live. Often she forgot what day it was, and it was better to live in a district where this sort of detail did not matter very much.

Fortunately, people in Blandley were very kind to her. The vicar often called to entertain her for an hour or two. Then there was another frequent visitor—Nurse Merrick. She had been the local midwife for so many years that even old Fred, who claimed to be the oldest inhabitant, had been known to admit that she had brought him into the world. She confessed to being somewhere between eighty and ninety, but she still wore her nurse's uniform every day—blue and white, always spotless, with a crackling white starched collar and front.

Although Nurse Merrick had no official standing since her retirement, it was the accepted thing for a new district nurse to call on her immediately after taking up residence. She had a plump, red, happy face; but she was a witch if ever I saw one. I was convinced that when she had been on the district most of the patients were cured by herbs and incantations.

I made my respectful call upon her on a wild March afternoon. She inspected me at the front door of her cottage, as though to check every detail before letting me in.

"Now," she said, "you'll get to know the old chronics as you go round, and you're to stand no nonsense." Her face darkened with fury. "Watch 'em. You'll need to watch 'em."

This began a long dissertation. Nurse Merrick might be retired, but there was very little she did not know about the local ailments.

"Oh, *her* . . . she won't get over it. No good playing about with her. Never pulled herself together after her husband died. She always was a wambly little thing, ever since she was a girl."

Soon Nurse Merrick was talking about Dr. Harold. "He'll never be as good as his father, Doctor Godfrey," she assured me.

Dr. Godfrey, it turned out, did not approve of the National Health Service, and was allowing his son, who was his partner, to take over most of the practice while he himself retained some of his more conservative old private patients.

The younger man was in effect doing all the hard work; but Nurse Merrick approved of the older man, and that was that.

I very soon made contact with Dr. Harold, of course. A district nurse's duties come to her mainly through the local doctor, who passes on routine jobs to her.

Countryman In Town

by DOUGLAS GIBSON

I saw you in a teashop in the town:
Though you were old, there was eternal Spring
In your bright eyes beneath the jaunty brown
Gamekeeper's hat; your waistcoat too could sing
Of country fields in chequered browns and reds.
So gay you looked, white-whiskered, and your face
Like a ripe apple, many turned their heads
Glad of such colour in that solemn place.

For we who work in cities half-forget
The beauty and the freedom and the space
Of your wide vistas, well beyond the fret
Of worried streets; too soon we lose the grace,
The natural dignity of you who know
The simple changeless things, move with the slow
Movement of seasons: unknowingly you bring
Into our weary town a gust of Spring.

Dr. Harold was a tall young man with fair hair and a slight stoop. His memories of hospital work were still recent enough to make him fussy about details. "Acts as though every bedroom in the district was an operating theatre, from all I hear," grunted Nurse Merrick. "Spends so much time washing his hands, folks die before he gets to 'em."

It was obvious that in time Dr. Harold would grow more casual, and would be better liked because of it. But during my first couple of weeks he followed me round like a shadow. It was not enough for him to leave a note or telephone message telling me about a patient. He came with me, or chased after me, to make sure that I grasped every detail about each case.

"Keep an eye on Mrs. Mallett," he told me solemnly. "Diabetic, you know. Check on her insulin supplies."

I assured him tersely that I knew all about diabetics and about Mrs. Mallett's injections. He nodded as I was talking, and then went on as though I had not spoken. “She wouldn't need injections if she'd stick to her diet. But she can't be trusted. Some people. . . .” He sighed.

I knew already that Mrs. Mallett could not be trusted. On one of my few visits to her so far, I had found her, in spite of all warnings about sugar consumption, happily eating a slice of bread liberally plastered with brown sugar.

She was an enormous woman, bulging at every seam. There were rolls of fat round her arms and neck, and she looked incongruously like a little girl—an inflated version of a chubby, greedy little girl.

What I had not gathered—what could only be learned from experience—was the extent of Mrs. Mallett's undependability.

After a month during which I had called regularly, she could still greet me with a bland shake of that enormous head.

“Fancy seeing you, Nurse.”

“Your injection,” I said.

A slow smile oozed up from beneath layers of fat pouching her face. “Oh, *that*. . . .” She giggled. “You want to do that again, do you?”

She sat down and bared her arm philosophically.

When I next called, the house was empty. I had to search for her through the village. She treated the whole thing as a lovable eccentricity which was apparently common to the local doctor and myself. We wanted to jab her with a needle: all right, she wouldn't raise any strong objections—if we could find her.

In some quarters there is an odd misconception regarding district nurses—quite apart from the idea that Q.I.D.N. (Queen's Institute of District Nursing) stands for “Queer Individual Doing Nothing.” It is believed that the provision of a car is an unwarranted luxury, supplied purely for the nurse's benefit. In point of fact the car is provided for the benefit of the patients. It enables the district nurse to dash from one to another with the minimum of delay.

And there is plenty of dashing to be done. The wide range of duties can be confirmed by a glance at the register in which I enter visits—pneumonia, cancer, arthritis, boils, pre-natal care, T.B. case, eyedrops, bee and wasp stings.

I shall never forget one day when I did my rounds. I had just called on Mrs. Mallett and, to my amazement, found her in. She had looked rather startled.

Obviously she had forgotten about me, and had no good excuse ready, no system of delaying tactics worked out. “I was thinking,” she had said wildly, “of going down to the stream for a paddle.”

It was a pretty poor effort and she had seemed to realize it. . . .

I was passing a thatched cottage, set a short way back from the road, when I became aware of someone waving to me. I drew up and looked back. A young woman was leaning over the fence, seeming to sag against it. I reversed, and drove on to the verge.

When I got out, she tried to push herself upright, but when she let go of the fence she doubled up again.

“Nurse . . . this awful pain. . . .”

I helped her into the house. She gasped out the information that she had been suffering from violent stomach pains all day, and had been sick. She looked as though she had a temperature.

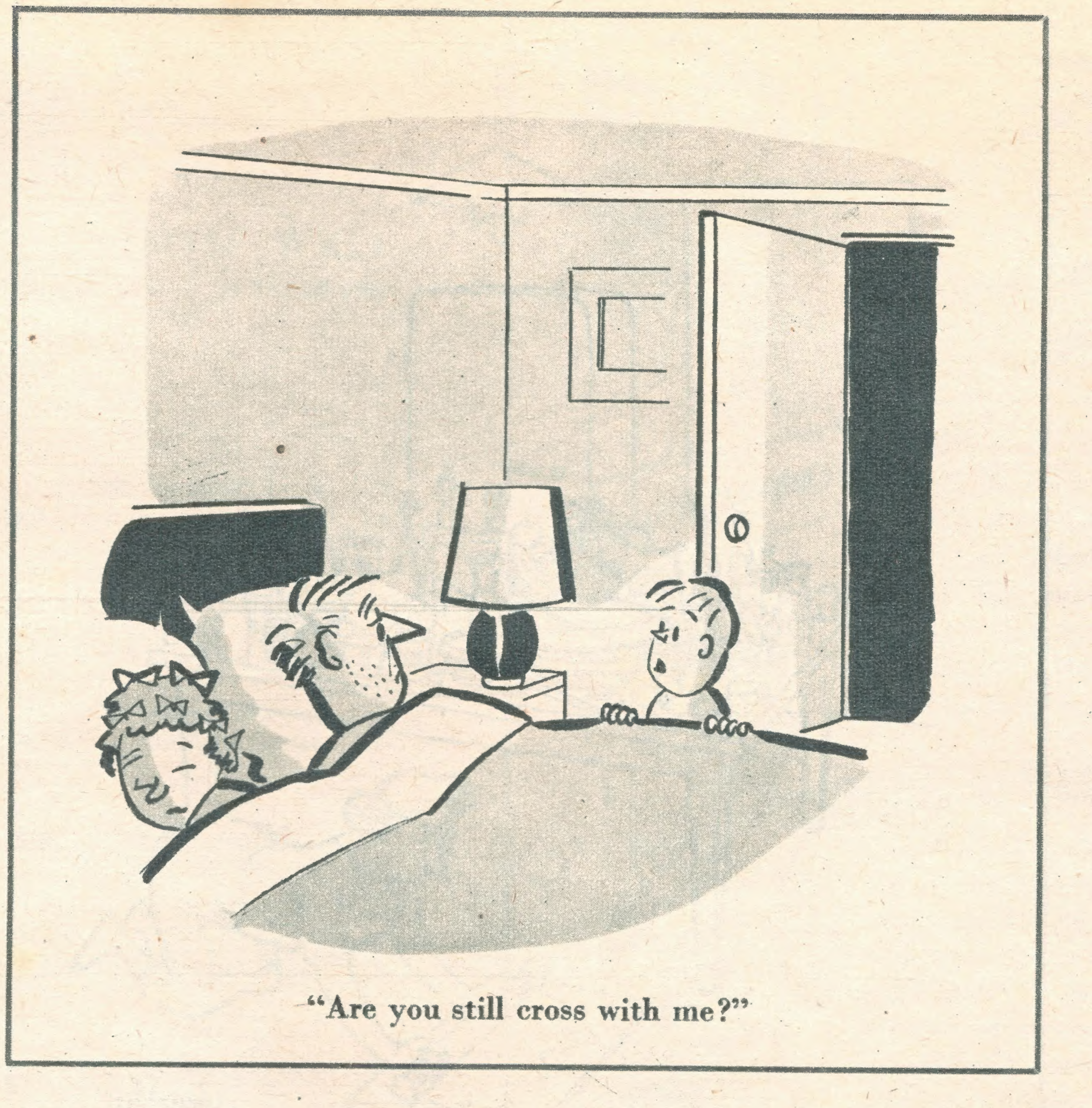
I REALIZED at once what was wrong. I dashed out and drove to the telephone box on the outskirts of the village. Dr. Godfrey was in.

“Pains, vomiting, temperature?” he said. “I'll be down at once.”

I went back to the woman, who was becoming frightened. “Do something, Nurse, please do something. He'll be too late. . . .”

At that moment the front door of the cottage opened. It was her husband. I recognized him as a man named Sharp, a rather jaunty, aggressive little man with a sardonic tongue.

“How long is that doctor going to take?” he demanded. “If this is appendicitis—and it looks like it—anything might happen.”



“Are you still cross with me?”

I said: “Appendicitis is rarely as urgent as all that, Mr. Sharp. It's just extremely painful.”

He glared at me, but before he could speak there was the screech of brakes that heralded Dr. Godfrey's arrival. A moment later the doctor was in the room.

“Appendicitis?” he barked at me, before even glancing at the patient.

“Of course it is,” interrupted Sharp.

Dr. Godfrey swung towards him and stared. “But didn't I send your wife into hospital three or four years ago to have her appendix removed?”

“Yes,” said Sharp.

“But dammit, man, you can't have two appendices.”

Even at a moment of crisis like this, Sharp could not restrain a faint smile. He said: “No, but you can have two wives. . . .”

Summer in Blandley can be a time of almost eerie stillness. The vale below lies in a shimmering haze; the slamming of a gate is loud along the village street.

Visitors come to stay at The Grange. Fishermen put up at The Malt Shovel. And the gipsies come. Their caravans are bright against the hedgerows. The landlord of The Malt Shovel puts cardboard notices in his windows: NO GIPSIES SERVED.

The gipsies are with us for several weeks, fruit picking, making sorties in the local villages and even as far away as Cranbridge to sell posies.

Also, they have children. If elephants have, as they are supposed to have, a special valley to which they all go to die, then I think one may assert that the gipsies have a village to which they come to have babies. That village is Blandley.

Here they settle for a brief space of time every year, calling on the services of Dr. Harold and myself—Dr. Godfrey's motto is also “no gipsies served” — and then moving south towards the hop picking.

There are only certain medical attentions which they will allow themselves to have during their time with us. Vaccination, for instance, if needed, is saved until after hop picking. There is a sound reason for this. If a gipsy is ill, or under medical attention for something such as vaccination or immunization, he or she cannot be moved on for fourteen days.

A farmer may be anxious to get the family off his land, but if the district nurse is in attendance he is not allowed to eject them, as she might have difficulty in tracing them and continuing the treatment.

The gipsies therefore take care not to contract anything while they are at work picking, when they can make some money; but the moment it is time to move on, they will succumb to innumerable minor diseases and submit any children who have been born during recent months to vaccination—and so have fourteen days' grace.

What with the gipsies, I had difficulty in coping with my responsibilities, that first summer in Blandley. I had, of course, my normal round of visits in the village. And on top of that, there were the schools.

With regard to schools, some people have limited ideas about the district nurse's duties. Because her main job there appears to be a regular head inspection, she is regarded as being little more than a walking de-infestation squad.

There is, of course, much more to it. I have to be very tactful and very cautious—studying a child's general appearance, surreptitiously examining clothes, glancing down ears and looking at teeth, and generally noting anything that may call for the attention of the medical officer.

WORDS—3

The turn of a sentence has decided the fate of many a friendship.

Jeremy Bentham

Nurse Merrick, it is rumoured, was a terror in her day to slovenly mothers and dirty children. When she walked along the village street, mothers would snatch up their children from the gutter and dash indoors to clean them up quickly. If they left it too late, they were liable to see their offspring pounced on and thoroughly examined.

“You couldn't do it nowadays,” Nurse Merrick once conceded wistfully. “They'd have the government on you.”

Certainly I seemed to inspire no fear—not even respect, if it came to that. I speedily discovered that the schoolchildren of Blandley had at once dubbed me “Nitty Nora, The Jungle Explorer.”

In the middle of the autumn term I had to make a thorough inspection. I made the mistake, after recoiling from the yellowing teeth of one small boy, of giving him a brief lecture on mouth cleanliness.

The next morning, an irate mother telephoned and gave *me* a lecture, assuring me that her family didn't need no telling about when and how to clean their teeth, that wasn't what they went to school for, and I'd be a lot better occupied looking after them as was dying for want of attention.

Accustomed, though, as I soon became to all types of telephone calls, one can be singled out as truly memorable.

I lifted the receiver and heard: “Post office here, Nurse. Mr. Mallett's in trouble. Can you get along there right away?”

I thought it was probably some minor household disaster for which the doctor would be a more appropriate visitor. Perhaps Mr. Mallett had sawn the top off his thumb, in which case the local hospital ought to deal with him. Or maybe he had driven a nail through his finger and fastened himself to a wall. Such things were not infrequent at Blandley.

Speculating along these lines, I arrived at the familiar Mallett house—which I had visited only that morning to give the usual injection—and was greeted by Mr. Mallett in the dark passage with its smell of paraffin and linoleum.

I said: “What's happened, Mr. Mallett? Are you all right?”

“Course I'm all right.”

“But the post office said——”

“It's not me. It's 'er.”

I went upstairs. Mrs. Mallett was propped up against pillows in bed, swigging a bottle of castor oil. I said: “Mrs. Mallett, what on earth——?”

“I got the collywobbles,” she said.

I went to the bed, and drew back the sheet.

A new-born baby was in bed with her.

“There,” said Mrs. Mallett archly.

I was speechless. For once personal feelings almost triumphed over my professional instincts. My first emotion was one of genuine anger against Mrs. Mallett. What business had she to go having a baby? I had been seeing her regularly—had seen her only a few hours ago, this very day.

But the baby was alive, and there had been no complications.

I eventually left the two Malletts tucked up as neatly and snugly as though I had been prepared for such an eventuality.

But how could I ever face Nurse Merrick? The prospect filled me with gloom. She would know instinctively that I had been unaware of Mrs. Mallett's forthcoming event. It would give her something to laugh over for months.

A mood of bravado came over me. Instead of waiting for her to come into our house, beaming with malicious pleasure, I would go immediately to tell her.

I went to her cottage and said bluntly: “Have you seen Mrs. Mallett about the place recently?”

“Saw her yesterday afternoon,” said Nurse Merrick.

“Do you think she's looking herself?”

Nurse Merrick snorted. “Whatever else she may or may not look, she always looks that.”

I said: “She's just had a baby.”

It was a triumph. Even Nurse Merrick was incapable of coping with that one. “A baby?” she echoed, utterly routed. “Well, I never.”

We both sat down and remained there in awed silence, feeling a sort of reverence towards the magnificent Mrs. Mallett. . . .

As the months went by, I began to feel more and more that I belonged in Blandley. I felt that no unexpected emergency in the district could baffle me.

I got to know the wiles and follies of my patients: I got to know which telephone calls were urgent and which could safely be ignored, at any rate for a certain time. I soothed people, gave injections and changed dressings. I listened to staggering marital confidences, trudged through a bubbling stream of gossip and saw the interiors of many vastly different homes.

There were philosophers, and there were grumblers. There were patients who co-operated gratefully, and patients who regarded me as an omen of misfortune. Children smiled at me; children screamed at me. I drank cups of tea all colours and consistencies.

No matter what case might be left in my hands, there was one person always ready to offer advice: Nurse Merrick. For example, she considered it her duty to warn me in advance about Mr. Deacon.

"You going to see that old ruffian?" she fired at me one Wednesday afternoon.

I said that I was. Dr. Harold had left word that Deacon was confined to his bed once more with congestive heart failure, and would need regular mersalyl injections and blanket baths. He was also a chronic alcoholic, which had a lot to do with his frequent relapses.

Nurse Merrick nodded grimly. "Well, watch out, that's all. He's a one for the girls is old Deacon."

Forearmed with the knowledge, I tackled Mr. Deacon with the utmost caution.

Mrs. Deacon came in carrying hot water and soap, and looked doubtfully at me.

"You'll be all right, Nurse?" she said in a pessimistic tone.

"Yes, thank you," I assured her.

She went out and left us alone. But Mr. Deacon did not move. He lay there utterly indifferent, giving not the slightest sign that he was aware of my existence.

I was a bit disappointed; insulted even. After all, I regarded myself as being not altogether unpresentable, and it was insufferable that I should arouse no reaction whatsoever in the amorous bosom of an old man who was "a one for the girls."

I drove away in high dudgeon.

"Well?" demanded Nurse Merrick when I next saw her.

I knew what she meant. I said: "I coped."

"Oh." She waited for further details. I did not offer them.

I couldn't have been doing my job so badly, because after a while I was entrusted with the care of a student nurse.

The student would not, I decided at once, make a good district nurse. Her name was Marietta, which in itself was all wrong. She was quite attractive, and she knew it. Her conversation dealt almost exclusively with her fiancé, Phil, and with the life they would lead once they were married. She assured me that she proposed to keep on with district nursing after marriage, but somehow I couldn't imagine it.

I was glad that Marietta was to be with me for only a few days. Her stories of Phil became repetitious and boring. On the last evening, instead of going over the things she had learned while coming round the district with me, Marietta devoted herself to a final lengthy summary of her wedding plans.

My eyelids drooped. The fire was hot, and I was tired. Suddenly I was aware that she had leaned earnestly towards me. I opened my eyes. She widened hers and said: "Now tell me—how did you come to miss the boat?"

I thought a great deal about Marietta after she had gone. The thoughts were not pleasant. And my thoughts about myself were not too bright. Consequently, when the phone rang one day and it turned out to be Henry Edwards, a man I had bumped into—literally—while out driving, and who, having survived the accident unscathed, had turned friendly and promised to ring me, he got quite a reception. Miss the boat, indeed!

I answered his telephone query without any hesitation. "I'd love to. Yes I do want to see you again, Mr. Edwards. All right . . . Henry."

I invited him to come to the house for tea on the following Sunday. Perhaps it was too impetuous; perhaps it would scare him off. But he sounded delighted.

That Sunday afternoon there was a brisk but quiet rattle at the front door knocker. This would be Henry. I opened the door. But it was Mrs. Leadbetter, a seventy-year-old, one of my heart cases—and a gossip.

She beamed at me. "So nice of your mother to ask me. Perhaps I'm a bit early?"

I hastily stood aside and allowed her to come in. Mother said to me in a low voice: "I'm sorry, Jo. I got mixed up. When you mentioned about tea today, I thought you wanted me to invite someone."

The knocker issued another summons, and I went to let Henry in. He took it all very well, particularly in view of the fact that I had no time to do more than sketch in the circumstances very briefly for him. As for Mrs. Leadbetter, she was overjoyed to meet him. Shaking hands, she peered from Henry to me and back again, and smiled as though she could not stop. This was really something: this was news—the beginning of something nobody but she knew about, surely?

"One gets very drowsy before a wonderful fire like this," said Henry after tea. "I could do with freshening up." He looked at me. "What about a spin in the car?"

To one who spent a large part of her working day driving about the countryside, the prospect of a spin in a car was not a particularly enticing one. But it was an escape from Mrs. Leadbetter—the only escape I could see. "That would be nice," I said.

Henry drove quickly away, as though anxious to put as much distance between us and the house before he spoke.

At last, as we sped through the encroaching darkness, he said: "I think you're wonderful."

The car stopped. Henry put his arm round me, and kissed me.

"We've got a lot to talk about," he said in a masterful sort of way. Then he kissed me again with a trifle more ardour, and we drove on, coming in a great sweep towards Blandley. Henry talked volubly now. He told me that he had been looking for me all his life. Fate had brought us together, and he would not rest until he had ensured that we would stay together for ever.

Because I was staring so fixedly ahead, I was first to see the fire. I said: "Henry—isn't that just over Blandley?"

WORDS—4

Words are the most powerful drug used by mankind.

Rudyard Kipling

He stopped in mid-sentence, with a hurt gasp. "It's a fire," he said grudgingly.

"Oh, Henry, it might be my house."

"It's not likely, is it?" he said. "Look here, Joanna——"

"Do hurry up," I implored him. Then I cried: "Henry—it *is* my house."

I tumbled out of the car and looked madly into faces lit by bursts of flame from the lower front window—the window of the sitting-room.

"Mother," I called.

The flames did not appear to have reached the upper storey yet, but thick smoke was seeping from the windows.

"Jo, there you are."

It was Mother. I flung my arms round her, and began to cry hysterically.

Mother said: "Really, Jo, you put far too much coal on that fire. I dropped off to sleep. When I woke up the carpet was ablaze."

"Where's Mrs. Leadbetter?" I asked. "Is she all right?"

"Oh, dear. Oh, gracious me. I forgot all about her. The last I remember she was going upstairs."

"Did you explain how the lock on the bathroom door sticks?"

Mother shook her head. Henry was suddenly running past me. I spun round, calling after him. He was a small figure, a dark smudge against the fiery brightness surging out from the house; and then he seemed to be engulfed.

"Henry!" I cried.

The fire engine came lurching and clattering up the lane. Men flocked over and through the hedge. Hose was unrolled, and there was a wild succession of shouts.

Then, in the doorway, Henry appeared, leading Mrs. Leadbetter. There was a roar from the crowd which had gathered. I ran forward and kissed him. There was more applause.

And there was a flash of light. Henry put his hand up to his eyes and cursed with surprising vigour. Our local newspaper reporter approached cautiously, holding a camera. "That was magnificent, sir. If you'd care to tell me your name——"

"No," shouted Henry furiously. "Go away. And don't you dare to print that picture of me. I won't have it, do you understand?"

The reporter backed away, clutching his camera. The picture duly appeared in the local paper, and in one of the London evening papers.

A week later, Henry was arrested and charged with bigamy.

The judge had a lot of harsh things to say about him. After praising him for his bravery in rescuing Mrs. Leadbetter he went on to warn the jury that this should not influence them when they made their decision. Henry was irresponsible. He was a menace to society.

Yes; I am afraid that Henry had dealt in big numbers. Six of his previous wives appeared in court, and there were reports of the existence of several more. He had an incurably romantic temperament.

Unfortunately my own name appeared in the papers. Both in the original reports of Henry's gallant rescue, and in the subsequent court proceedings, reference was made to me as "a friend he was visiting." Readers, I thought, would draw their own conclusions: here, they would whisper, was the latest potential victim in a long line of gullible women.

One day I burst out to Nurse Merrick: "I'll have to leave here. I'm going to apply for another job."

"Where?"

"I don't know."

She drew her plump little lips in, and her cheeks distended like a hamster's. She snapped: "You mean you'd leave Blandley, just like that, without knowing where you were off to?"

"It doesn't matter where. I can't stay here, that's all."

"Why can't you?"

I tried to look boldly into her beady, accusing eyes. I said: "You know perfectly well. Everyone must be talking."

Nurse Merrick stared unblinkingly back at me. "Talking?" she said. "Talking about what?"

Abruptly she snorted, got up, went to the window, and said: "It's a nice day. Go on out and do your visits. Go and have a look at people. That's what you're here for. And if any of them talk—about *anything*—come back and let me know."

I took her orders, and went out. I got into the car and drove round the district. They were the usual people, the familiar faces, the people among whom I have lived for such a short time and yet to whom I now seemed to belong. How could I leave Mrs. Mallett to the tender mercies of somebody else?

A week later Nurse Merrick said to me tersely: "You're staying in Blandley, aren't you?"

"Yes," I said, "I'm staying."

So here I am, still in Blandley. There are few changes—and yet, in a way, there are changes all the time. Mrs. Prebble continues to add to the population, while some older people slip away from time to time, leaving their names suddenly, strangely fresh on new headstones in the churchyard. Every spring Dr. Harold and I go round to count up how many of our old clients have survived the frosts.

The other week I went in one morning to pay my usual visit to old Mr. Deacon. He was not making a very good recovery; his health seemed to be static, his life ticking over on a half-submerged level. My old apprehensiveness was dead. He had become a routine job, about whom I hardly thought while I was working on him.

So it came as quite a shock when, as I bent over him, he caught me round the waist with one arm. I struggled. His grip tightened. His eyes were wide open, and he gave me a lecherous grin.

I screamed for help. Something in the next room went over with a crash, and Mrs. Deacon came hurrying in.

As she helped me to disentangle myself from her husband's clutches, she was almost sobbing with relief. "Oh, thank God," she gasped. "He must be feeling better."

He was not the only one. As I left the house, I began to whistle a tune. I was feeling quite absurdly pleased with myself.

THE END

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Joanna Jones's story is an extract from her book "Nurse Is A Neighbour" which will be published by Michael Joseph this month, 12s. 6d.

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